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**Performing Migratory Identity – Practice-as-Research on
Displacement and (Be)Longing**

by

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Thesis

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Contents

List of figures	4
Acknowledgments	6
Declaration	8
Abstract	9
Arrival	10
Departing, arriving, repeating and returning	11
Between knowing and unknowing	19
Before the Encounters	22
Before the performance there was a story that really happened	23
Border crossings: before and after the split and dislocation	24
A citizen of no country	30
Decay of the body, decay of the land	36
Encounter One	42
No-body, in exile	43
Rupture	45
Small things can throb in our insides for a long time	50
Asphyxia	59
Like a rabid dog, sensitive to every sound	65
Suspended	69

In the place where I was born nobody is waiting for me	75
After the trilogy	82
Encounter Two	84
About practice-as-research methodology	85
Cartographies of memory	96
Section one: a circle of bulbs	104
Section two: timing and positioning the body in space with and against the objects – mask, remote-control car, stuffed bird, electric shock machine	112
Section three: two films and a cage in suspension	118
Section four: the sound of time – metronome, salt, violin, song	123
Addendum to sections one to four: soundscape	130
Conclusion: discursive contexts	132
Departure	141
Appendix	150
Notes	170
Bibliography	171
Artworks, films and DVDs	171
Publications and weblinks	175
<i>Internal Terrains</i> DVD	inserted in thesis as a separate sleeve

List of figures

Figure 1: Stills from <i>Meat</i> film in <i>Rupture</i> , camera/editing by Bob Karper	38
Figure 2: Stills from <i>Rupture</i> at the SPILL National Platform, camera and editing by Manuel Vason	50
Figure 3: Studio images of the final episode in <i>Rupture</i> , photos Bob Karper	52
Figure 4: Images from <i>Rupture</i> by Jacob Patterson	58
Figure 5: Stills from two of the three short films shot on location at Taquile, Lake Titicaca for <i>Asphyxia</i> , camera and editing by Bob Karper	61
Figure 6: Images and stills from <i>Asphyxia</i> at CPT by Bob Karper	65
Figure 7: Objects from <i>Suspended</i> , images by Natasha Davis	80
Figure 8: <i>Suspended (Unrooted)</i> , image by Edurne Aginaga	81
Figure 9: Lighting installation, image by Josh Waddington	104
Figure 10: Electric shock machine, still by Chris McAlinden	112
Figure 11: Stuffed crow, still by Bob Karper	112
Figure 12: Ducking under the mask, still by Craig Cox	113
Figure 13: Twirling under a cage, still by Craig Cox	118
Figure 14: Still from <i>This is Me Here</i> film by Natasha Davis	118
Figure 15: Playing the violin, still by Bob Karper	124
Figure 16: Covering the metronome, still by Craig Cox	124

Figure 17: Mother text episode, image by Maria Tzioni 124

Figure 18: Catching salt, still by Craig Cox 124

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Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own and that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university. The practice-based research carried out under studio conditions and finally presented in a processed state to an audience as practice-as-research (PaR) is also my own work insofar as I conceptualised, instigated, wrote, directed and performed it. Owing to the nature of performance practice the research was obviously dependent on and emerged under collaborative working circumstances. All contributors to this integrated process were aware beforehand that its outcomes would be presented as doctoral research in my name and agreed to this being the case. Their respective contributions have been given appropriate credit in the acknowledgments section of the thesis.

Abstract

Drawing on autobiographical material related to the author of this thesis, Natasha Davis, and using her own performance practice within relevant artistic and theoretical contexts, the thesis focuses on practice-as-research (PaR) as a means of exploring questions around the trauma of displacement due to migration. It investigates how the creative work of a performance artist, who uses body and memory as critical performance tools, reveals the logic of exilic subjectivity and materiality, as well as the political status of performance as a medium dealing with this complex theme. It does this in three distinct stages. First, it provides brief autobiographical and historical background to the civil war in former Yugoslavia (in the 1990s), which centrally informs the performance works analysed here. Second, it sets up an initial encounter with the reader, *Encounter One*, in which Davis' trilogy of works *Rupture*, *Asphyxia* and *Suspended* is examined, making use of practice-based research findings to identify useful methodologies such as repetitive returns to the source of trauma, placing the body out of balance and fragmentary composition. Third, in *Encounter Two*, a brief overview is provided of current PaR theory as it pertains to the project in question. The thesis then applies these combined findings from the trilogy and PaR theory to the new intermedial PaR project *Internal Terrains*, which represents in live and documented form half of the thesis overall, to generate new discourses around the trauma of displacement and notions of home and belonging. Starting the investigation with objects rather than the body of the performer, *Encounter Two* pays attention to methodologies applied in previous research and sources new tools useful in illuminating displacement as rooted both in loss and liberation. At the same time it explores ways that PaR can be written about, which includes investigating how practice can perform on the page. Examining the original impact of the trauma of migration through to the ways traumatic pasts can be put to rest, the thesis argues that one of the ways the latter can be achieved is through repetitive and structured returns to the past and through recognising and embracing a state of being 'out of balance'.

Arrival

Departing, arriving, repeating and returning

In the last ten years I have created six performances, several gallery installations and a number of short films dealing with the identity of the migratory body, border crossings, memory and land, departures and arrivals. In these works I have used my own history of displacement and repeatedly returned to the trauma of departing from a country in civil war, as a stateless citizen. I was born in former Yugoslavia into a mixed Serbian and Croatian family situation, and emigrated in the early 1990s, as the country descended into military conflict. This autobiographical experience of being uprooted has centrally informed my body of work as an artist and emerging scholar.

The focus of this thesis is on how practice in performance art handles trauma and the effects of trauma on body and memory. My research is grounded in autobiographical experiences as well as in the ways other artists have responded to the trauma of displacement affecting their lives. For this reason one entire chapter in this thesis, *Before the Encounters*, is dedicated to the autobiographical background to my work. Theoreticians such as Dennis Walder (2011), Deirdre Heddon (2008) and Susan J. Brison (1999) have foregrounded the strength of autobiography both as methodology and significant research material. This is not surprising considering the relevance of personal experience in ethnographic research, for example. This provides for and validates the collecting of evidence through personal records of events and simply through allowing people to talk about their lives and experiences, in order to gather evidence for research in social and political science, human rights, cultural theory and other contexts. Relying on personal testimonies has allowed researchers to

map historical events and histories of emotions and traumas. In my thesis this does not mean that the more conventional focus on theory has been completely abandoned, but merely that when I use theory I do so primarily in terms of its relevance to my practice. I am continuously aware of the fact that theory and practice are of equal validity and that in this thesis theory must leave enough space for the discourse emerging from the autobiographical experience, as well as practice-based-research and practice-as-research (PaR). I distinguish between the latter two methodologies in the way I see the relationship between the process and analysis parts of the research. Analysing practical work and the issues emerging from it after the work has been made and shared with the audience constitutes, for me, practice-based-research. Here practice generates the material for discussion and is interrogated in a similar way that theoretical literature resources would be interrogated. PaR, on the other hand, is itself a process of investigation, an active ingredient used to create new discourse, a method of generating questions, experimenting and observing the nature of experimentation at the same time, analysing, recording and thinking through practice in the same way a scientist would experiment in a laboratory with liquids and materials, and chemical reactions between them. In short, it generates its own (new) forms of knowledge.

Following from my autobiographical background, in *Encounter One* I will provide a critical analysis of my recent autobiographical performances, using practice-based-research to discuss the simultaneous terror and relief involved in repeating the experience of exilic pain. What emerges from this process is the realisation that while departure from the wound may initially be a successful survival strategy, remembering and repeating the story becomes a political act performed through cataloguing the loss, resolving the ambiguity of the original experience and speaking out about the invisible

and the unreachable. This happens with an understanding that a total return is impossible – we cannot literally travel back to the time in which the wound occurred. As the trilogy of works analysed in *Encounter One* will confirm, repetition also has a meditative, soothing quality that can counteract the state of being unbalanced, out of place and in between. To repeat is to be safe, at least in the moment. To repeat is also a hope that something new may emerge through the act of repetition.

In *Encounter Two* I will first provide an overview of the possibilities that PaR as a methodology can offer to theatre practitioners and scholars. I will then use practical methodologies identified as useful in creating performance work that deals with the trauma of displacement in *Encounter One*, and apply them to *Internal Terrains*, which is the practical submission as part of this thesis. This PaR project will facilitate practising *appointments with the real*, as Cathy Caruth puts it, and realising a performance in which all objects utilised and the entire *mise en scène* evoke the idea of imbalance as a result of displacement (Caruth 1996: 105). I will use the objects as mnemonic devices at the start of the inquiry and reflect on the place and time between the traumatic exilic past and the uncertain but hopeful future as a liminal and vulnerable space. This will be enhanced by the deliberate unpredictability of objects, either as a result of how they are used and positioned in the space or the way I interact with them, or how fragile they themselves may be. Materially speaking, one object is made of glass, another is a piece of fragile taxidermy, another a sensitive mechanical device. *Encounter Two* is accompanied by a DVD of *Internal Terrains*, which, as a live performance, was presented as one half of this doctoral submission¹.

The focus on autobiographical experience and the use of PaR as methodology created a need for different ways of writing and recording the research on page, to

include images, split paragraphs, performative writing and other methods.

Throughout the chapters to follow, each time these methods are employed, I will provide guidance to the reader as to how to engage with these fragments.

Indian scholar Rustom Bharucha subverted the idea of ‘When the play ends, what remains?’ into ‘When the play ends, what begins?’ (Bharucha 2011). Drawing on this approach, in *Departure*, as I draw the curtains to the reflective series of explorations in this thesis, and simultaneously put a full-stop at revisiting the past, I will attempt to imagine possible departures from my current practice and possible future arrivals. I will also take a lateral look at what recent departures several other artists, who are also dealing with their traumatic memories of displacements, have taken or are currently taking in their own practice. If we imagine that at the point of drawing the curtain the artist, the audience and the reader have arrived at a certain point of ‘knowing’, this very gesture will create a full circle by bringing us back to the original starting point, the point of ‘unknowing’, located at the start of a new PaR inquiry, albeit with the hope that by recording the previous journey at least certain memories of traumatic pasts would be put to rest. Peggy Phelan evokes Kafka’s statement ‘I write to forget’ to draw our attention to the fact that ‘once something gets written down, the writer might get past it. This idea was the kernel of psychoanalytic talking cure as well: put everything in a story and forget about it’ (Phelan, 2000: 52). In another piece of writing Phelan reminds us that ‘We can resolve trauma by putting time in order, by allowing it to pass into the past’ (Phelan 1998: 6).

When I was a child in former Yugoslavia, we often played a game that would, translated literally, be called ‘Between Two Fires’. In this game, each ‘fire’ is one of the two players at each end of the court, ‘firing’ fast balls at a number of other players

caught in the field between the two 'fires'. The players in the field need to, by the rules of the game, be constantly on the move as balls are thrown at them from one 'fire' line to the other. The only way for the player to get out of that in-between run is by catching enough balls to 'save her life'. But the balls were very difficult to catch in that hectic motion. It took time and a lot of running, often leading to exhaustion.

Metaphorically and playfully, in this way every child in former Yugoslavia rehearsed, in the years prior to the civil war, the conundrum of existing between the trauma and the memory of trauma, running lost between the two 'fires', frantically trying to process information, remember, react in order to 'score' enough points and earn the right to exit the game. In terms of the nature of the traumatic memory, modern psychoanalytic theories distinguish between traumatic memory and autobiographical narrative memory. Traumatic memory is generally characterised as disruptive, unpredictable and lacking an integration of the traumatic content into the life of a person suffering from trauma. On the other hand, autobiographical narrative memory 'is derived from our personal history and is able to be placed in a symbolic, verbal form that is personalised', although a combination of the two is also possible (van Der Hart et al 2006: 38).

It is mainly to the autobiographical narrative memory that I return in my journeys back in time and place, in my search for the personal material of symbolic and metaphorical value, in order to share the trauma of displacement and migration with the audience. As the writing that follows will gradually reveal, the meditative and repetitive nature of these returns become crucial in the very creation of the performance works discussed here. Meditation as a process is itself repetitive in its nature, the focus is on the rhythm of the breath that is repeated at regular intervals.

Perhaps anything repeated at regular intervals for a sufficiently long period of time will achieve a meditative quality, but repetition can also be compulsive, fragmented and occurring out of control, in bursts, especially if we consider it in the context of uncontrolled repetitive returns to a traumatic event in the past that is not fully integrated yet in the present.

In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, narrative and history*, Cathy Caruth reflects on Freud's description of suffering and its patterns to discuss the idea of a double wound '[a]s the repeated infliction of a wound' (Caruth 1996: 3). Caruth uses Freud's reference to Tasso's romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata* (*Jerusalem Delivered*) to suggest that the literary text dramatically expands on repetition in its compulsive sense. In this text, Tasso's main protagonist Tancred kills, tragically and without wishing to, Clorinda, the woman he loves, twice. He kills her first in her earthly life, not recognising her in disguise, and for the second time when, with his sword, he pierces through the tree in which her soul had been captured. Beyond the involuntary and symbolic repetition of the wound that Tasso inflicts on Clorinda, Caruth notices 'the moving and sorrowful *voice* that cries out, a voice that is paradoxically released *through the wound*' revealing to Tasso what he had done (2). Caruth is intrigued by the relationship between the act of repetition and the truth that emerges from repeating the wound, as something that throws light on the previously unknown, or only subconsciously known, through the very ripples caused by the repetitive act.

In creating a piece of art, be it a performance, an installation, or a film, I have discovered that practice-as-research and practice-based-research, as well as the public sharing of my performances and other works, can be a strategic, transformative and productive way to deal with the compulsive quality of the desire to return to the

moment of trauma related to exile and migration. When I say strategic I mean that the repetitive returning to the source of trauma generates for me a range of practical methodologies, which can be useful in creating the work dealing with body, memory, identity and migration. For example, a recurring practical methodology, which has proved successful in generating evocative visual material, has been physically placing my body out of balance, as the following chapters will demonstrate. This methodology has generated significant visual episodes, which also integrate sound, text and choreography, and are used to express central ideas in each performance in a very visceral manner. In one episode I deliver a key poetic and anecdotal fragment about difficulties in exile on a wobble board. In another I sing on a layer of apples on a raised platform. In yet another I am suspended above the audience while being supported by a high ladder or I am descending a staircase shrouded in a veil and mask which barely allow me to see where I am stepping. Another methodology has involved stretching the physical boundaries of the body, such as how long I can dance on reduced breath. When I claim that PaR dealing with trauma can be transformative I mean that the material artistic result arising from these repetitions and returns has the potential to transform troublesome and problematic personal and collective experience into a narrative that does not necessarily need to be harrowing, painful or displacing for the performer, the collaborators and the audience. Repetitive returning to the source of trauma in this way has the potential to lessen the pain of exile. At the root of every psychoanalytic theory from Freud and Janet onwards there lies the belief that until the cause of pain is revisited, understood, re-experienced and processed emotionally and intellectually, life cannot be fully restored. In the context of exile, from this moment onwards we can start imagining the possibility, however complex and different it may

be for each individual, of the pain of exile gradually progressing towards the acceptance, functionality and perhaps even potential pleasure and creativity of exile².

In addition to basic personal circumstances that need to be met for the beginning of this journey between the pain and the pleasure of exile, Judith Lewis Herman (2015) also points to the necessary external, historical and political conditions that need to exist in order for a certain kind of trauma or a psychological condition even to be identified as an issue, to be seen as legitimate. She provides three examples in modern history when the right external circumstances were created to identify and offset the research regarding three different types of trauma. She notes that hysteria was recognised as a serious condition at the end of the nineteenth century with the emergence of republicanism. Grassroots self-organised anti-war protests conducted by veterans after the Vietnam War led to the recognition of war-associated, stress-induced neurosis. Finally, the trauma of sexual and domestic violence could only emerge with the feminist movement in the 1970s. It would appear that the current political and historical conditions of a huge number of people being displaced from their original environments due to wars, economic poverty, political oppression and natural disasters have contributed to official recognition of the trauma associated with migration and exile. A performance artist with first-hand experience of displacement, creating work related to the trauma of exile based on autobiographic accounts, is able to publicly work through and disseminate this significant and politically current cultural experience. Returning to personal stories and repeating them through revisiting facts, rehearsing, presenting the work and sharing it with an audience contributes to keeping this discourse alive and visible in the public realm. This becomes even more significant when we remember that Caruth recognised in her

reading of Freud, what is more and more widely accepted in research today, ‘that the theory of individual trauma contains within it the core of the trauma of the larger history’ (Caruth 1996: 71).

Between knowing and unknowing

This introduction to the thesis is named *Arrival* in recognition of the importance of repetitions and returns as a methodology in making my work. However this also points to two significant moments in the very process of creating work that deals with the experience of exile and migration. One is the moment at the beginning of a journey when the conditions in a migrant artist’s life are sufficiently met materially and emotionally to enable them to engage with the mechanism of conscious repetitive returns to the source of trauma, whether this is for the purpose of artistic research, documentation, activism or a combination of these. The other significant moment points towards the relief and the fulfilment of completing the journey of developing a piece of work and sharing it with an audience after a series of critical and analytic returns to the past. This journey is different from physically returning to the place that one migrated from. In other words, the kind of journey that authors such as Svetlana Boym (2001) or André Aciman (2000, 2011) write about in terms of nostalgia and often refer to as deeply disappointing. The disappointment may have to do with what I mentioned earlier in this text – that a complete return is never possible because time has passed and the places themselves, as well as the individuals implicated, have gone through physical changes. Aciman, who was forced to emigrate from Alexandria in Egypt, has written extensively on the desire to return to the ideal in the past and how

that ideal, once encountered in reality, becomes dissatisfying. About one such physical return to the streets of Alexandria from his past, he says: 'But nothing happened. I was, as I always am during such moments, numb to the experience' (Aciman 2011: 27). For Aciman the real experience of the return happens only later through his writing, which is effectively practice-as-research. It is through the artistic, critical and analytic research, and then through rehearsal, collaboration with other artists and performing the work in public, where the repeated returns to the past and the source of trauma become meaningful, strategic, productive and fulfilling. This is where the possibility of a real return can happen, the return liberated from the feelings of nostalgia and freed from the compulsive quality related to post-traumatic returns. Aciman says about this process in one of his collections of essays:

'Writing might even bring me closer to this street than I'd been while living there. Writing wouldn't alter or exaggerate anything; it would simply excavate, rearrange, lace a narrative, recollect in tranquillity, where ordinary life is perfectly happy to nod and move on. Writing sees figures where life sees things; things we leave behind, figures we keep. Even the experience of numbness, when traced on paper, acquires a resigned and disenchanted grace, a melancholy cadence that seems at once intimate and aroused compared with the original blah. Write about numbness, and numbness turns into something. Upset flat surfaces, dig out their shadows, and you've got dreammaking.' (Aciman 2011: 27-28)

In other words, through the creative act of writing about the experience, a form of acceptance occurs which helps us recognise that nostalgia is often an indulgence of the pain of the impossibility to return, and that an attempted return may have all along been a paving of the path for a viable future. When making performances about an autobiographical experience that involves returning to a wound, to a past trauma, there are several layers of telling, each removed from the other in time and space.

There is a story that really happened, a memory of the story, an act of recording and processing the story material, a rehearsal, and finally the performance in the present, followed by the reception of the performance by the audience, which in itself adds an additional telling of the story. And whilst the wound and the performance of the wound (the repetition of the trauma) are temporally removed from each other, the past and the present meet in the body of the performer, the body inscribed through the experience of displacement and migration.

How does the creative work of a theatre performer, through the recreation of trauma, reveal the logic of exilic subjectivity and the political potential of the performance as a medium? How can a traumatic exilic past be juxtaposed with an exilic artist's present experiences of longing for returns? How does the mechanism of repetition work physically and psychologically for the performer (in rehearsal and on stage) and for the audience? What can be revealed about migration and displacement through using body and memory as critical, performance tools? In the writing that follows I attempt to provide evidence of how I have facilitated these journeys, these repetitive returns and the meetings of knowing and unknowing in the last decade of my practical and theoretical research. For this reason I decided that naming the following larger segments of writing *encounters* rather than *chapters* would be more appropriate, and with that I will now invite the reader to work their way through the encounters to come.

Before the Encounters

Before the performance there was a story that really happened

In the *Arrival* to this thesis I indicated that, instead of addressing my specific performance works immediately through the encounters, I would first invite the reader to *Before the Encounters* as an interlude, to share autobiographical facts necessary for the thorough understanding of my recent trilogy of works *Rupture* (2009), *Asphyxia* (2010) and *Suspended* (2011). I will then proceed to analyse these works fully in *Encounter One*, as together these works form the foundation upon which my current practice-as-research *Internal Terrains*, submitted as part of this thesis, is grounded.

In this sense *Before the Encounters* is not only a pause between the *Arrival* and *Encounter One*, but also a transition between two points in time: the point ‘before’ (history and autobiography) and the point ‘after’ (performance works). This transition evokes the suspension that exists between the reality of the autobiographical material and the artist’s embodied memory of it, here accessed through repetitions and returns using PaR. The suspension does not exist only in time (then and now), it is also a suspension in place (there and here) between the homes prior to and following the dislocation. As a transition between the *Arrival* and the encounters, this segment begins to illuminate the process of transformation of the real into performance practice, across time and place. *Encounter One* and *Encounter Two* will examine this in more detail. The connection between *then and now* and *there and here* happens through memory and embodied memory in the performer, who traces the journey of dislocation and loss through a series of repetitions and returns, and in the process begins to outline a narrative of home and belonging, and the trauma related to this narrative.

As I was born in former Yugoslavia and displaced by the civil war in the 1990s, which has heavily informed my performance making, *Before the Encounters* aims first to address the autobiographical background. Second, it sketches a brief historical narrative of the conflict in the Balkans prior to and during the disintegration of former Yugoslavia into several independent entities. Finally, it offers first glimpses into the processes and the practice emerging from the autobiographical material, as well as theoretical and practical frameworks in which the emerging practice is grounded.

Border crossings: before and after the split and dislocation

I was born in 1965 in communist Yugoslavia while Josip Broz Tito (post-World War II Prime Minister, and later President and President for Life) was still alive. I was the older of two children, born into a cross-cultural (Serbian/Croatian) and cross-religious (Orthodox/Catholic) family. Shortly before the civil war started I graduated from the University of Niš in Serbia in 1990, where my family was based at the time³. In 1991 I visited London for six months for professional development and to research the most appropriate course for MA studies. Having decided on a programme in creative writing, I returned to Yugoslavia to wait until the start of the academic year in 1992. In anticipation of that I left my books, clothes and various personal items behind in England. During that brief period of time I held a temporary teaching post in rural southern Serbia, while political unrest began to seep through the country, starting with Slovenia in the north in early 1992, which was the first republic to detach itself from Yugoslavia. Historically each of the six republics of Yugoslavia had a constitutional right to claim independence, provided this was agreed by referendum between various

nations living in each republic. In reality independence was not something that would have been encouraged and easily executed either within the existing communist structures in former Yugoslavia or within the wider context of international politics. Despite this, and due to certain support from Western Europe, as well as the fact that Slovenia was relatively ethnically homogenous, it managed to sever itself from Yugoslavia comparatively peacefully. At that point the turmoil, threatening to turn into wider civil unrest, started extending through Croatia, the republic where I was born, which had a more complicated ethnic and religious make-up. This led to the involvement of the Yugoslav National Army (Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija) as decided by the central government in Belgrade, Serbia. I should say that my intention here is not to analyse in detail the reasons for the civil war in Yugoslavia and how it played out, of which much has been written in recent years by numerous authors such as Dževad Karahasan (1994), Alastair Finlan (2004), Misha Glenny (2012) and others. Instead I will refer to it from an autobiographical perspective as the backdrop to my physical and psychological displacement in and from the geographical region, which significantly informs my interdisciplinary performance works, films and installations.

I was only twenty-five at the time and, although my generation was of course extremely aware of the current political happenings in the country, very few expected or could imagine a civil war. In reality this myopia was naïve, considering the economical and religious differences between the six republics. Even though the whole of former Yugoslavia was very much a shared cultural space, Slovenia and Croatia identified with Western Europe more than other parts of the country did. Historically this goes back to the dominance of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy over these territories, in comparison to the Turkish Ottoman Empire rule in the rest of the region

(Serbia, Monte Negro, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina). At the same time a number of politicians, such as Slobodan Milošević, Vojislav Šešelj and Vuk Drašković, were turning towards militant nationalism, while a high level of corruption permeated state systems, notwithstanding the historical ballast of Communism and politics related to the Eastern Bloc. Yugoslavia was never strictly a part of the Eastern Bloc⁴, however its downfall may have been connected to the wider crisis of Communism, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the political changes in the Soviet Union (USSR) that ended in 1991, and the end of the Cold War.

Media coverage of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina was selective and politically biased. Then suddenly borders started shutting, and political and economical sanctions from the European Union (then European Economic Community, EEC) and United Nations (UN) were imposed on Yugoslavia, which rendered my return to and studies in England impossible. Postal and telephone communications with Western Europe were blocked, as was trade (the Internet not yet having been implemented for general use). Parallel to that, the banks in Serbia closed their doors to clients and my funds for my post-graduate studies in England disappeared overnight. As the Serbian-Croatian conflict in Krajina (Croatian territory populated mainly by Serbs) was becoming bloodier, and President Slobodan Milošević's strategies more militant and totalitarian, I made an instant decision to emigrate in whatever geographical direction possible. This instinctive reaction was driven by economical reasons as much as the knowledge of the historical facts regarding the previous Serbian-Croatian conflict prior to and during World War II. It was a well-known and documented fact that during the previous war neighbour spontaneously turned against neighbour in a bloody conflict resulting in a genocidal

level of extinction, often caused by misinformation, different interests, prejudice and hatred.

Misha Glenny's *The Fall of Yugoslavia* is a well-researched study of the region in the early 1990s, displaying sensitivity and an objective view of all nationalities involved in the conflict, from the perspective of an experienced journalist and eye-witness to many of the events of the time. He traces, step-by-step, cardinal mistakes committed by politicians on each side and strategic failures by the EEC, UN, international organisations and peace-keeping forces to restore harmony to the region. He also recognises the responsibility of the media and mentions the Serbian radio station *Srpski Radio Knin* as an example of 'a vital accomplice in the dissemination of falsehoods and the perpetuation of divisive myth which has turned one hapless *narod* [nation] against another equally innocent one. The only truth in the Yugoslav war is the lie' (Glenny 2012: 21). In no time, as Glenny states later in the book, 'Belgrade and Zagreb [felt] like the capitals of different countries' (82).

In the atmosphere of increased violence and fear, and the threat of the conflict spreading throughout the country, I packed a small bag, including all the available funds in my possession (the equivalent of one hundred pounds sterling at the time) and left on one of the irregular trains in Yugoslavia in early July 1992 to head for the only border remaining open – the crossing to Greece. The long journey through the night was traumatic. There were scarcely any female passengers on the train – it was dangerous territory for a young woman. The compartments were heavily overcrowded, charged and aggressive. Many people were drunk. Rakija, a local alcoholic brew, was passed around and occasionally a bullet was fired from a gun. The train was continuously being stopped between stations, bodies of passengers were reshuffled,

there were threats of killings if more space was not made for newcomers, who were themselves desperate to get on the train. It was held for a long time at the crossing with Macedonia – still a Yugoslav republic, positioned between Serbia and Greece – in torrential rain, with passports disappearing into the night. We were not aware at the time how worthless our passports would very soon become. The train was cleared to proceed after this inspection and reached Greece at dawn. As the war progressed, check-points like this became increasingly dangerous and aggressive locations.

This type of experience is common to many migrants in exile departing from their places of origin on any form of available transport, even walking or swimming. For example, Behjat Omer Abdulla, a visual and performance artist from the Kurdish part of Iraq, now based in England and Sweden, whom I have interviewed as part of this research, has harrowing experiences of crossing borders, only to end up in limbo for ten years in the UK between his arrival in the country and the time he finally acquired his legal status. Graeme Miller's installation *Beheld* pays *homage* to refugees trying to escape from their countries by hiding themselves in airplanes as stowaways, not knowing they will be ejected to their tragic deaths at some point of the journey across the sky. As I write, the current political situation forcing people of all ages to choose escaping on boats from countries such as Libya and Syria, at a huge risk of drowning in the seas before they manage to reach European shores, alerts us to the desperate measures refugees will take to escape from political and economical hardships.

Certain events and accumulated individual histories and mythologies of crossing borders have the potential to become part of a collective cultural memory, which may aid the process of mourning and healing. It is important, however, to recognise the

significance of personal memory, that is, when it is re-collectable. Dennis Walder reminds us that :

Personal memory may appear to go unrecognised in the public realm of history, or at least to be undermined for its lack of rigour or precision; but it provides the momentum as well as the detail without which that kind of approved memory could not exist. (Walder 2011: 46)

Walder's investigation is informed by post-colonial studies and his research into forgotten, erased or misinterpreted pasts, and the sense of alienation this generates for individuals and entire nations. Fran Lloyd is another theorist who also recognises the importance of locating ourselves 'through our histories and experiences at both a personal and collective level' (Lloyd 2001: 139). She discusses this issue in detail in her in-depth analysis of contemporary Arab visual culture, connecting the binary elements of past and present in regards to memory. 'Memories are actively produced in the present as part of our continual negotiation of our contradictory identities in lived experience' (141). She is aware that the past cannot be resolved without returning to it and reinterpreting the impact it has made on our present. I would also like merely to point at this stage to the crucial significance of personal body memory to elucidate and analyse the issues around identity, migration and exile, which is a vital ingredient of my performance works. The memories and interpretations of past events and traumas, as the material that shapes my vision of the present, are *located* in my body. They *locate* me in my current identity and inform my agency. Past is therefore inseparable from the present and the future, and performance making as a process is one of the ways for me to integrate that past into my current present. Performance making also provides a way to access the past, as the body can carry memories that it is unaware of, so performance can call them forth.

A citizen of no country

I spent the summer of 1992 on the Greek island of Skiathos and then relocated to Athens, where I secured accommodation, as well as a teaching position.

Administratively the situation was complex. My passport was due to expire in a short while and Yugoslavia had started disintegrating. In the meantime I had begun to get used to being a citizen of no country. Whilst I managed to secure a temporary right to work through an international school that employed me, I had barely any social, political or human rights, let alone insurance and medical cover. My predicament was open to wide exploitation and abuse, yet I considered myself lucky. Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where we had lived when I was a child, was under siege⁵. I had been unhappy when my father moved us from there to Serbia in 1975, but I could not stop thinking what it would have meant to have remained.

Following on from years of journalistic and essayistic writing, my poetry was published in Yugoslavia in the Croatian journal *Qvorum* in 1990, the year I returned from England and, inspired by several art courses I had attended at the Tate Gallery (today Tate Britain) in London, I started making my first installations using mixed media. This creative activity was halted while I was in Greece. I was simply not able to write or make, because all my energy was needed purely to survive. The critical analysis and reflection required for in-depth artistic research and creation would have brought traumatic events too close to the surface, so the survival strategy here included a form of exile from the self. Doris Salcedo, the Colombian sculptor, who has since the early 1990s created a large body of work around memories of loss and displacement, claims that 'When you are caught up in a conflict, in precarious conditions, you can't

even remember things, never mind produce history' (Princenthal et al 2008: 25).

Salcedo's artistic research is based on interviews with survivors of the civil war in Colombia, after which she creates large installations made from furniture, clothes, shoes and other personal items used as evocative and moving symbols of loss, an inevitable ingredient of a devastating political conflict. Other artists have also reflected on the phenomenon of not being able to create from the position of being too close to the wound. Srđan Valjarević, a Serbian author, writes beautifully about this syndrome in *Lake Como* (2009), an account of a novelist taking on a significant writer's residency in Switzerland, as an author coming from war-torn Serbia, who is unable either to write a word or find any sense in writing a word. In an environment in which all other writers and scholars from other countries are networking and being productive, he spends his days staring at the white walls of his opulent accommodation, getting drunk with waiters on the premises and in village pubs outside, climbing a local mountain and finally starting an erotic relationship with an American academic. While this can also stand for an allegory of Serbia's inability to recover from the devastating political and economical consequences of the civil war, I am particularly sensitive to this author's inability to engage with creative work before the personal and collective traumas are resolved in some way. Displacement often feels like existing in limbo: emotionally, somatically, linguistically, creatively, administratively, politically and financially. Bodily functions and spaces that the body and mind occupy need to 'catch up' with evolving events, a feeling not unlike jet-lag perhaps: a permanent sense of being lost and disoriented and lacking the means to become 'located' once more. While trying to find my way around this psychosomatic state, traumas became harboured in my body, unaddressed, unspoken. They started working their patient

somatic way, much like liquid damage in a laptop computer. Drops of liquid can take a long time to find their way amongst the wiring and components, until they start compromising and eventually shutting down first the battery, then the lights, the hard drive, the logic board. Repair is possible but it requires time, finances and specialised knowledge.⁶

To illustrate the split further, as well as the liminality involved in the suspension between two realities, the absurdity of the situation, the pain and a certain kind of beauty accompanying the heightened phantasmagoric state of dislocated existence, like in a feverish dream, I will for a moment add here a layer of parallel poetic text (using an excerpt from *Rupture*, the first part of the trilogy). The text on the left side of the page should be read as a ‘poetic shadow’, a mirror, an image in words, accompanying the text on the right, which continues the current flow of the autobiographical account of events. The reader needs to choose here which text to engage with first. There is no correct sequence, the parallel texts are complementary versions of each other, although they may, to a degree, spoil the pleasure of discovery for each other, too. In addition to providing an extra interdisciplinary layer, this small and playful conundrum is also an introduction into the performative style of writing in *Encounter One*, an example of transition from the real into the performative, as well as a metaphor for the singularity of the available options while living in exile.

“When my country started falling apart,
I emigrated to Greece – the only western nation
that kept its doors open for me after the
Western embargo on ex-Yugoslavia. While my
country was deciding who is who and what is
where, I spent six stateless, rootless,

I remained six years an emigrant in Greece. After
four years a Croatian embassy was established
in Athens, as Croatia had by then formed
itself as an independent state. I was relieved
and expected finally to gain citizenship,
considering I was born in Croatia to a

ungrounded years in Athens, during which nobody wanted me: Serbs thought I was too Croatian; Croats that I was too Serbian, and so on... But day-to-day existence continued. I even worked. I wasn't allowed to say at work where I was from, I had to be 'from England'. When I pointed out my English sounded foreign, they suggested I could say my family was based in Hong Kong.

I could never sit still or be alone through that time. No matter how many hours I worked, I carried on, stayed with people, walked, talked, until I was completely exhausted and could fall asleep as soon as I lay down in bed.

One day I visited a work acquaintance and complimented her on her embroideries. She even embroidered her sofas and armchairs. They looked amazing! When Christmas came, she bought me an embroidery set, and because she had been so nice to me, always, I realized I actually had to do it! It was daisies. Rows and rows of daisies. An ancient motif from Crete. As I was embroidering rows of green stems, yellow stamens and white petals, I felt so alone."

(excerpt from Rupture)

Croatian mother. I was, however, refused twice, second time was final with no right to appeal. Although there was no explanation provided, it is likely the reason was the fact that my father was Serbian and that my last place of domicile was in Serbia.⁷ I finally had to sue Croatia to achieve citizenship and won the case in a Croatian court, representing myself from exile. With the fresh passport of a new country the borders opened for me but remained traumatic. Travel was still complicated as a citizen of former Yugoslavia. One relief, however, was that I could finally leave Greece, my prison. A low security prison, as beautiful a prison as can possibly be, nevertheless a prison with bars, instruments of power (such as work and stay permits), and instruments of the system and authority – constant reminders of being a no-body, with few rights. In analysing Mona Hatoum's work, Ursula Panhans-Bühler quotes Edward Said, according to whom '[t]he exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons' (Panhans-Bühler 2004: 39).

There are two urgent issues at play here. One is the mixed feeling of 'relief' of finally officially belonging to a country, even if that country did not want me

culturally. The second urgent issue is the desire to be able to leave, under any condition, the 'prison' of the status quo, unofficial, unresolvable status I had in Greece, and be able to travel again. Travel is a symbol of freedom unequally distributed in the international context. It is closely attached to the perceived political and economical standing and strength of each state, which then influences the currency attached to their respective passports and finally impacts on the ease of crossing borders their citizens will experience. In other words, as a US citizen one rarely needs a visa and will encounter few questions when entering another country, whereas as a Cuban citizen the procedure both prior to the travel and at the actual border will be much stricter.

Doreen Massey refers to this by saying that:

[...] different social groups and different individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. [...] Some are more in charge of it than others, some initiate flows and movements, others don't; some are more on the receiving end than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. (Massey 1996)

The feeling of relief finally to belong to a nation, even though at the time I found it equally difficult to identify myself as a Serb, Croat or Yugoslav (I still do), was inevitably tarnished by the fact that, when voting for independence, Croatia did not take into account the needs and desires of the Serbian minority in the country. It has been suggested by some that the premature decision by Germany to recognise Croatian independence considerably worsened the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which then escalated to another level of national conflict, the worst since the start of the civil war in the region.

As for the issue regarding living 'in prison', in *On Hospitality* Jacques Derrida questions the notion of a foreigner through history and philosophy, from Plato and Socrates to the current times. In doing so, he immediately brings forth the first

obstacle in the foreigner's ability to 'defend' herself: the barrier of language. For Socrates it is not necessarily a foreign tongue, but the foreignness of the legal language of the court, where he needs to explain himself as a free thinker and skilled speaker (Derrida 2000: 15). Equally, any foreigner who finds 'home' in a new country will forever display evidence of her foreignness, difference and inadequacy, even if she migrated to a country where the same language, albeit in a different accent, is spoken. For it is not only the language, although it is an incredibly substantial part of it, but also the culture of living, the codes of behaviour and relationships, and many other ingredients of living in exile which will create obstacles and emphasise the notion of being out of place. This dissonance in one's existence, the imbalance, the deeply embedded in-between-ness, the gesture of liminality, will remain as constant evidence of dislocation.

Derrida subverts the notion of foreignness and proposes a utopian concept of:

[...] absolute hospitality [which] requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names. (25)

The unconditional welcome, which does not ask for proof, does not question, does not require explanations and justifications, is something that in the majority of cultures exists within an extended family, in certain cultures extends to the same nationality, and even to any human being (for example a notion of hospitality in some Bedouin or desert cultures). However it does not encompass the legal status of the foreigner. For this reason, the interrogatory quality of the exilic shelter can invoke the unsettling topography of a prison, as an abstract intersection of dislocation, lack of belonging and

lack of understanding. The otherness is continuously re-enforced and highlighted by what Derrida reveals in his observation of the treatment of the foreigner: 'The relationship to the foreigner is regulated by law, by the becoming-law of justice' (73). Taking into consideration the abstract notion of 'a life in prison', the dialectical relationship between the law and everyday life has perhaps never been tighter and more uncomfortable for the foreigner than nowadays with the proliferation of CCTV monitoring, restrictions on freedom, fears of terrorism, anti-immigration strategies, government funds going towards military interventions in other countries, and strengthening of the political right and nationalist parties across Europe.

Decay of the body, decay of the land

Having left Greece in 1998 when Croatia finally granted me citizenship, I managed to visit my family, both in Croatia and in destroyed, impoverished and dictatorial Serbia for the first time in years. I was able to return to England, commence MA studies, and enter a wider employment market. A few unsettled years followed in which I migrated between the Middle East (Syria) and several other countries, for economical, legal (migration laws) or career reasons, before finally settling down in London, which had been my intention ten years earlier. I gradually returned to writing and to playing music, although officially I dedicated my career to supporting other artists in the performance and live art sector as a producer. Publicly and in terms of visible output I did not return to creating art until Pacitti Company invited me to Rome in 2007 to perform in *Finale* at the Roma Europa Festival⁸. *Finale* is abstractly based on Emile Zola's book *Thérèse Raquin* (2004) and consists of a fixed core with a number of devised contributions from local artists. I was one of the devisers required

to create and perform several episodes in response to the dark material around a murder as a form of escaping prison-like circumstances in the main character's life. It felt like a lid was suddenly lifted off my head – the ideas came rushing out and I created a small body of work. Nevertheless I did not consider continuing. Artistic creation requires analysis in depth and detail, I was not ready and still found the process traumatic. A significant aspect of this artistic relationship, however, was that, in line with the strategies Pacitti Company employs to develop work, new material was accessed through the body. This is not a strategy I had encountered in my own practice in the past. All my ideas were first conceptualised, intellectualised, and then expressed in some form of text or mixed media. I played musical instruments and that of course needed to be embodied, but I never created new music, I replicated what already existed, i.e. playing music was never a research process. Generating material through and from the body made the process more organic for me and, to a degree, less threatening in terms of accessing personal memories and returning to the material that may have traumatic content. It is therefore not surprising that, when I finally did start researching my own new and original material, I instinctively chose the body as the medium and the starting point of a research inquiry. What finally made me take the decision in late 2007 to leave my secure producing job, continue collaborating with other artists and soon focus on creating solo work was something that brought the body once again to the very core of the issue: I was diagnosed with cancer. Becoming potentially terminally ill focused my vision and identified priorities. Returning to making art, and through it exploring the roots of my dislocation, was one of them. In recovery after the operation I experimented with meat as material and created a short film of a large piece of meat manipulated with my hands and surgical instruments,

which later became part of my solo performance *Rupture*. Meat remained one of my regular materials for a period of time, a piece of it hanging dripping from a surgical instruments installation in *Rupture*, and in *Suspended* I minced meat through a grinder onto a clean white table-cloth as a visual metaphor of the daily grind in emigrants' lives. I thought about the decay of the body and started connecting it conceptually to the decay of the land, thus allowing myself for the first time to return to the memories related to the war, my years as emigrant and the trauma of displacement. The impetus for it came from the foreign bodies of cancerous cells, occupying my own culturally foreign body carrying memories, traumas and stresses for almost two decades.

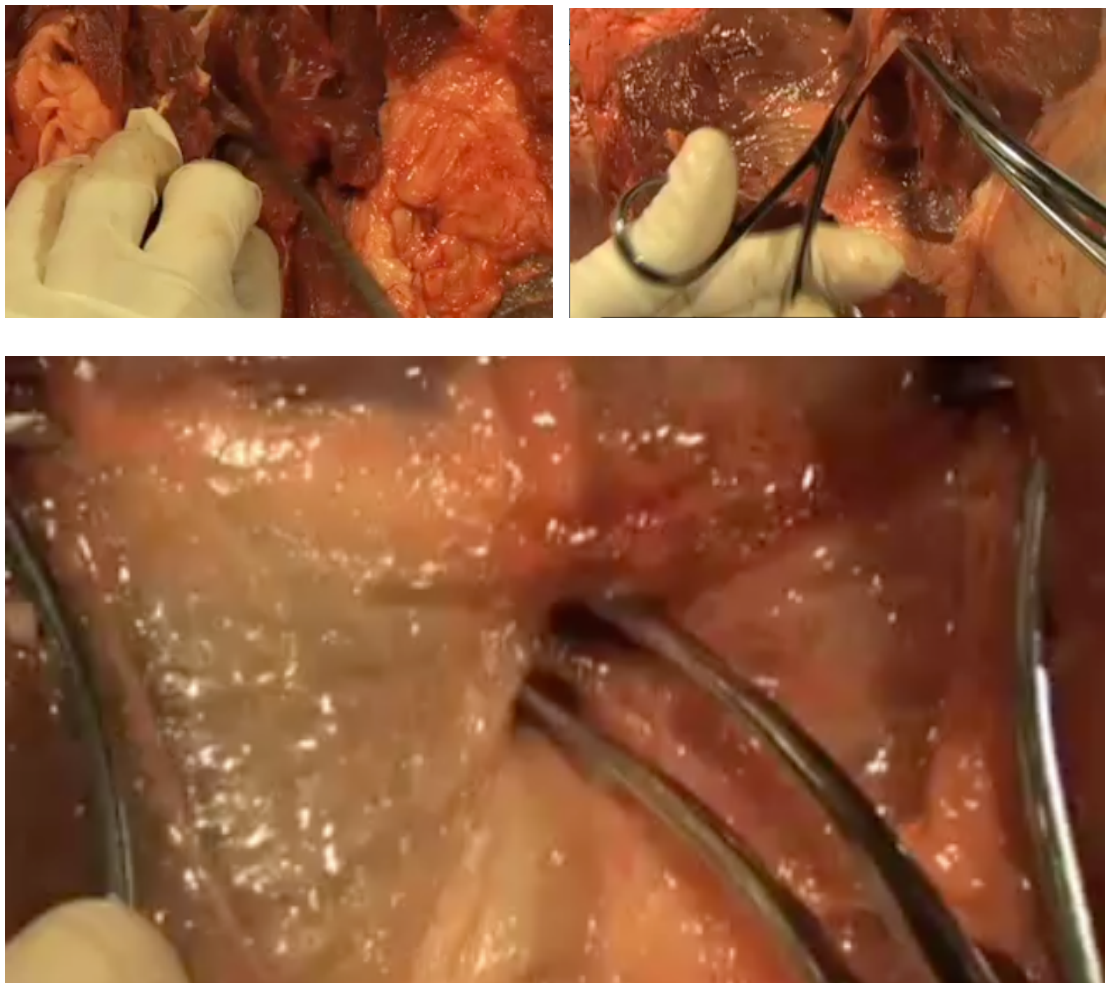


Figure 1: Stills from *Meat* film in *Rupture*, camera and editing by Bob Karper.

Through my research into identity and trauma, I also became interested in the possibility of trauma being passed on culturally through generations, firing behavioural and metaphorical frequencies similar to neurons or stem cells in our bodies. I am intrigued by the possibility of the displacement I embody being a continuation of the ruptures passed on to me from previous generations. Although it is questionable whether there is any reality in the possibility of culturally *inheriting* trauma, in the way we would physically inherit the propensity for developing cancer, it is plausible to imagine that trauma can be passed on to younger generations via social conditioning. Panhans-Bühler, although not directly referring to the previous thoughts, suggests a possibility, drawing on Said's thought, and a title of one of Mona Hatoum's pieces, *The Entire World as a Foreign Land* that:

[...] even 'home' is an exile, the first in which we are expelled from a mythical paradise that lives on in our collective or individual imagination. The second exile as a forced move to a foreign land opens up the wound of the first exile, but also provides a chance – admittedly an immensely difficult one – of confronting the issue, whereas the invisible wound of the suppressed first exile can have hauntingly unresolved and devastating consequences. (Panhans-Bühler 2004: 39)

I grew up in-between the contrasts and contradictions of two different cultures, as well as two different parents: an authoritative father and a mentally fragile, withdrawn mother, so the displacement might have started even before the war and exile within the context of home. My father brought us up not on fairy tales but on his professional, medical books containing pictures of open wounds and severely abject images for a child, illustrations which, paradoxically, embedded in my memory as they are, bring non-threatening and even warm, nostalgic feelings when encountering bio-medical material and images of decay today. The ability to see the beautiful and my attempts to create beauty out of harsh material might have germinated through such moments of

dislocation, as well as through a certain blurring of the boundaries between the inner and outer worlds. Julia Kristeva poses a philosophical question whether one 'should recognise that one becomes a foreigner in another country because one is already a foreigner from within' (Oliver 1997: 274-275). Kristeva, like Panhans-Bühler, realises that the feeling of being a foreigner, displaced and alienated from the immediate environment, goes beyond the physical dislocation and beyond one generation and is a much more complex embodied condition, which includes the personal, political, legal, historical, linguistic and bio-medical.

In the continuation of this writing, as well as in my practical research *Internal Terrains*, I will continue to address connections between body, memory, identity and migration. I will do this through the key concepts explored in my own work, through practice-as-research and through relating this material to a selection of other artists' works exploring similar issues. In *Encounter One* I will attempt to throw light on how autobiographical material can be interpreted through performance, film and installation and given political and socially engaged context, using my recent trilogy of works *Rupture* (2009), *Asphyxia* (2010) and *Suspended* (2011). What effects do body, memory and trauma have on the shaping of ideas around identity, migration and displacement? What form of discourse is created and received through my practical research? What can be revealed about migration and displacement through using the body and memory as critical, performance tools? I will be looking at how traumatic memory can be transformed into performance and contribute to the remaking of a self through a series of repetitions and returns. I will also begin to explore the possibility for displacement to be(come) a positive experience, rooted not only in loss but also in

liberation. Beginning to address these questions in *Encounter One* will contribute to preparing the ground for the practical research in *Encounter Two*.

Encounter One

No-body, in exile

This encounter builds on the autobiographical facts stipulated in *Before the Encounters* and focuses in-depth on my recent trilogy of works *Rupture* (2009), *Asphyxia* (2010) and *Suspended* (2011). Together they form the foundation upon which my current practice-as-research, a crucial part of this thesis, is grounded. The performances themselves have been presented in and adapted to numerous and varied settings (black box, five-bedroom house, industrial warehouse, garden, gallery, dance studio) and forms (performance, installation, durational act, ritual, an act of memory, performance lecture). Using these various forms and settings they locate and dislocate the temporality of an exilic journey spanning over more than twenty years and alternate between forgetting and remembering, vanishing and rematerialising. The decay of the body over time and in relation to material events is contrasted with the materiality of endurance, the body as a permanent site of trauma, and the politics of reclaiming and embracing the liminal existence between *here* and *there* (spatial) and *now* and *then* (temporal). Suspended between those binary realities, the trilogy is interested in how exilic identity is shaped and preserved, and asks if dust ever settles on the past. Does grass grow over it?

In this chapter I will deliver an illustrated description and analysis of my trilogy of works *Rupture*, *Asphyxia* and *Suspended* to identify performative choices in dealing with the trauma of exile and dislocation. I will achieve this by using several layers of expression:

- Layer one: Analytic scholarly writing.

- Layer two: Poetic performance excerpts, twice here running in parallel to the analytic writing in the form of split texts, emulating the similar moment in writing initiated in *Before the Encounters*.
- Layer three: Images from the works.
- Layer four: Moments of shared choreographed intimacy between the performer and audience member(s) as a form of performative writing (occurring in three instances during this chapter).

The scholarly discussion (layer one) will be accompanied twice by poetic excerpts from performances (layer two), used in parallel to provide a second voice as a performative gesture, to heighten and refine the crucial concepts in the work: suspension, liminality, imbalance, trauma of displacement and the pain and pleasure of living in exile. The use of this more poetic meta-language is also significant for further understanding of the surreal and survivalist line pervading the performance material, which I did not think would be equally effectively and thoroughly conveyed through more analytic text or a more conventional, scholarly way of writing. The images (layer three) will be used to both illustrate the works and permit their visceral nature to perform on the page. Direct dialogues between the performer and audience member(s) as a form of performative writing (layer four) will also occasionally be used to further elucidate the performance works. This fourth layer will create a short pause, an interlude, for extra insights into the process of making and to underline the importance and inevitability of the carefully chosen and choreographed intimacy between the performer and audience engaging in repetitive returns to the autobiographical material from the past, pain, trauma and the absurdities of exile. I

have marked the instances of using the fourth layer through the text as ‘silent dialogues with audience’, numbered them ‘one’, ‘two’ and ‘three’, and presented them graphically in bold. In reality these writings record my thoughts only, however I have called them dialogues rather than monologues because they are addressed directly to the audience and arise from the unspoken exchanges with them happening during performances. The function of layer four, as a form of expression, is to convey the nature of the intimacy, chemistry and physical and emotional bond developed between the performer and audience in the performance works analysed here.

The above layers of expression, of recording, are carefully chosen procedures and methodologies which will allow me to harvest more precisely the insights as they are generated through practice and the process of thinking through practice. They are just some of the available tools, strategies or techniques enabling practising scholars to examine performance practice in alternative ways, and this will be further expanded in *Encounter Two*. Importantly, together the above four layers emulate the intermediality of the works in question, taking into consideration the fact that the performances themselves use complex layers of poetic text, installation, film, lighting design, movement and original sound.

Rupture

Rupture is a non-linear autobiographical solo performance with a narrative evolving through ritual, installation, original and recorded sound, film and poetic text. It consists of five episodes, each commencing with a different garment. I take my previous dress off, package it in a ball with twine, walk towards the stage-centre, hold it

in front of me and pronounce 'grudva u utrobi', thus marking a journey from one clearly distinct traumatic event to another, albeit not in a chronological order. The traumas include the rupture of a country, the rupture of a family, and the rupture of a marriage. Combined they cause a breakdown of health and finally lead to a ritual of mourning and reconciliation with the past in order to reclaim the future, regain agency, and evaluate what belonging and home mean to me. This relates to and creates a dialogue with Brison's writing about trauma. Brison claims that:

[...] the undoing of the self in trauma involves a radical disruption of memory, a severing of past from present and, typically, an inability to envision a future. And yet trauma survivors often eventually find ways to reconstruct themselves and carry on with reconfigured lives. (Brison 1999: 39)

Rupture is aligned in form and content with Brison's thinking: in its disrupted narrative, in its relationship to non-chronological time, in its attempt to ritualise the space, the attempt to create a sense of beauty and elegance, in imparting a survival spirit that seeps through, as well as the occasional humour in adversity of exilic challenges. In addition, both in its content and aesthetics, *Rupture* conveys a sense of the willingness to reconstruct the traumatic events one by one, address them to the core, openly and nakedly in a physical and psychological way, years after the traumas initially occurred.

Rupture is the first in my recent trilogy to start envisioning a reconstructive future from the ashes of past traumas. My performance work is in English, however I have always found it important to deliver at least one sentence in my mother tongue, to acknowledge symbolically and linguistically the origins of my exilic journey. It is also a verbal act of rebellion, a small gesture against the acts of being silenced or marginalised

that many migrants and refugees experience in their new homes. '*Grudva u utrobi*', as cited earlier, means a ball of something heavy in the upper stomach area. Every dress, shaped in a ball when taken off, represents a traumatic episode still living in my body, the body of the performer. Brison also claims that 'memories of traumatic events can be themselves traumatic: uncontrollable, intrusive, and frequently somatic' (40). The audience may never fully comprehend the sentence literally, unless they understand Serbo-Croatian. However, on a visceral and emotional level, and through the repetition of sound and movement, they eventually can sense the meaning of it even though it is in a different language. I started developing the material which was later shaped into *Rupture*, the first part of the trilogy about identity, migration, body and memory, in the summer of 2008 as I was recovering from cancer. I had just had a major medical operation performed on my body and was allowed to do very little. Prior to the operation I had several biopsies and for a full year my body had been subjected to various interventions, violations and medical examinations, most of which included long needles being inserted into sensitive layers of my inner skins and 'grabbing' a piece of flesh for further analysis. I started thinking of the ruptures in the body – the inevitable daily damage due to ageing, as well as ruptures due to illness.⁹ This led me to begin to connect, on a philosophical and metaphorical level, the decay of my body to the decay of the land where I came from. In the 1990s former Yugoslavia went through a civil war and eventually split into six smaller independent countries.

In order to highlight the surreal aspect of living in exile, as well as the sense of loss, I will now briefly employ the method of using a layer of poetic text, a 'verbal image' as an illustration, running on the left side of the page, in parallel to the continued analysis

on the right side. The frustration involved in reading this text, as was the case in *Before the Encounter*, is related to the decision that needs to be made as to which one to read first. The eye cannot take in both at the same time. The ear cannot receive them simultaneously either. If two different voices were to read both texts aloud to us at the same time, the sound would become cacophonous and incomprehensible. In order to understand anything at all, the ear would have to focus on one text only and receive half of the information at best. The fact itself that it is impossible to receive both texts or layers at the same time (the surreal and the analytic), either aurally or visually, is also a metaphor here for the difficulty of coping with the absurdities of exile. While fully entangled in a surreal set of circumstances for an extended period of time, it is challenging and perhaps impossible to be analytic and creative at the same time. It is something that may, however, improve later through a series of repetitions and returns, through the ‘reconstruction of the self’ and ‘severing of the past and present’, as one begins to overcome the trauma of exile, as previously outlined by Brison (39).

<i>My mother and father visit me in London</i>	I developed an interest in exploring mental states
<i>I ask my dad how he likes it all</i>	and a delicate balance between mental health and
<i>He mentions a famous Croatian actor</i>	instability, as well as what relationship they may
<i>and says how not even he could have</i>	have with trauma and accumulation of stress due to
<i>ever been in a house as nice as this.</i>	civil unrest, political turmoil and war. One of the
<i>That amuses me and I decide to</i>	episodes in <i>Rupture</i> recalls a dreamlike,
<i>show him a trick – how I can fall asleep</i>	phantasmagoric fragment about my parents
<i>in a standing, almost falling position.</i>	visiting me in England. At first everything
<i>It’s a feat of relaxation and a kind of</i>	appears normal, my father and I even
<i>self-hypnosis</i>	rejoice in the beauty of my house – a conscious
<i>that I’d learned on a meditation course.</i>	need to confirm that ‘I am well’, perhaps even that I

*My mother walks to the window
 and starts crying
 I hug her round her shoulders
 and ask if anything is wrong
 is she unhappy?
 She says the house is warm
 much too warm, she can't stand it.
 She opens the front door and
 runs down the several steps.
 She slips, starts almost flying down,
 and ends with her face down in the snow
 because it has snowed in London today

 I sense she is not hurt and is savouring it,
 doesn't want to move
 I walk towards her and try to lift her
 by her arms
 It's terribly cold and she is very very heavy
 I somehow manage to do it
 but all my strength goes into holding her
 not letting her slip again on her unsteady,
 delicate, aging legs.
 (excerpt from *Rupture*)*

the text rarely appears even remotely graceful, however the very physical action facilitates the return to the past both for the performer and the audience and, although I never quite balance myself on the board, I also never quite fall, the in-betweeness remains as a *status quo*. As this is also a piece of equipment now widely used in gyms

have 'succeeded' economically and monetarily, despite all the trauma. In the twentieth century, due to wars and economic instability in Yugoslavia, migrants regularly left home and settled in other countries, mainly Germany, as guest workers, *gastarbeiter*. Many of those workers, often women, would have intended to stay only for a while, to earn enough to buy attractive clothes, but would instead remain in Germany, in various production line and factory jobs, as long as they lived.

Margareta Kern has recently created a short film *GUESTures I GOSTIkulacije* (2011) based on the interviews with some of these workers, which offers glimpses into their lives. In my own surreal memory of my parents visiting me in England, my mother is both my real mother, briefly on a respite from the clinical depression, and a symbol of the thin line between balance and imbalance, which is a metaphor and methodology that I continuously employ in my work, as indicated in the *Arrival*.

In another episode of *Rupture* I attempt to deliver an elegant fragment and a piece of poetic text while balancing myself on a wobble board. The movement that accompanies the last few lines of

to strengthen legs and hips, in the context of the performance this implies that life in exile can lead to the empowerment and strengthening of the body, increased discipline through the training and focused concentration not to fall off the board (lose balance) and hurt oneself.

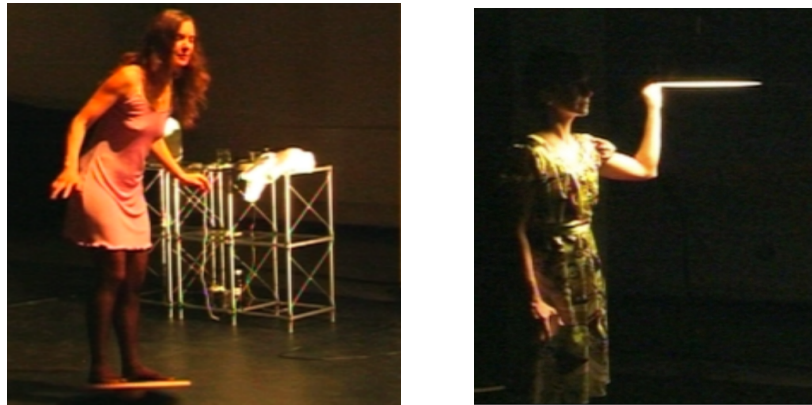


Figure 2: Stills from *Rupture* at the SPILL National Platform, camera and editing by Manuel Vason.

Small things can throb in our insides for a long time

Rupture begins with the episode in which I walk to my ‘work-desk’ area to apply to my face what is, as the audience will later understand from the text, green toothpaste. This will subsequently make my face tingle and feel both uncomfortable and heightened throughout the entire performance, thus emulating continuous discomfort and a sense of alertness in exile. I then proceed to swing the hanging light above my and the audience’s heads while humming a ‘cadaverous, repetitive sound’. The accompanying text provides a fragmented short look-back at the years of living in the communist world as a reticent child with a ‘lugubrious mother and a stolid father’, in which my body craved for ‘aberrant things but learned to suppress them for the fear of punishment’. Even at a young age I understood ‘weirdness’ was *punishable* – an

innovative political or politicised outspoken phrase or sentence could lead to political imprisonment in post-war communist Yugoslavia. As for creative thinking in general, my mother was artistic, introverted and 'strange' and was later interned in a mental hospital. Thus the opening episode in *Rupture*, a fragmented memory, becomes one in a series of meditative returns and associations to a possible displacement or dislocation from the self, which may have occurred years before being displaced from that specific location. Applying toothpaste and swinging the light that comes dangerously close both to my and the audience's heads is an autobiographic memory and the distabilsing performative act of a dislocated person, as well as a nod to performance art (I refer to this humorously in the text). As a child at the time I of course did not know this repetitive and imbalancing act could be seen either performatively or as a comment on the social and political turmoil around me.

From the first episode and onwards *Rupture* continues almost as a catalogue of cracks and breaks of the body, land, mental health, family and marriage, following on existing traumas, creating new ones and leading to a multi-layered dislocation. Together the episodes explore personal histories and tell a fragmented tale of living in a spasm between the East and West; it is a tale of war, a tale of illness, a tale of the infertile body and infertile land, but also a tale about endurance, about reclaiming and embracing a cultural background and a state of bodily health, making sense of events in life which initially and sometimes for a long while do not make sense, and consequently investigating and becoming aware of what traces these leave on the body, both in itself and as cultural signifier.¹⁰

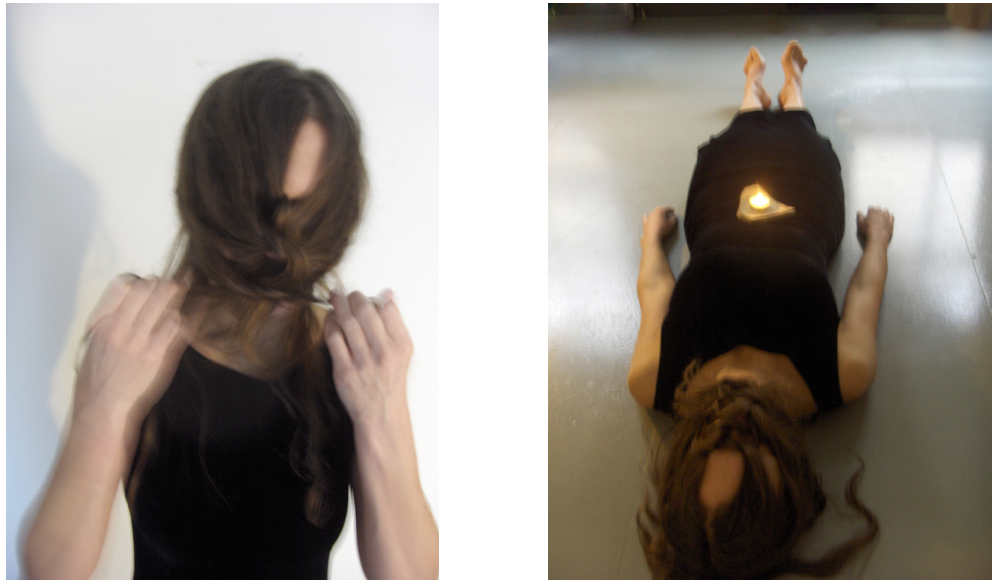


Figure 3: Studio images of the final episode in *Rupture*, photos by Bob Karper.

Rupture explores the body as a permanent site of trauma. In the final episode of the piece, which lasts ten minutes, I perform a ritual in which I unwrap, from around my waist, a see-through hospital bag, with my name and a long number, containing my own dissected uterus, extracted from my body following a surgical intervention to eliminate cancerous cells from the body. I transfer it to a vessel and during this process, through a series of ritualistic actions, I have the chance to hold the womb pieces, feel their texture and come to terms with the fact that this part of my body is not in me any more, and that I need to wear surgical gloves in order to ‘protect’ myself from it (the liquids in which it is preserved) and ensure its longevity as a specimen outside of my body. At the beginning of the ritual I light a candle and place it on a small, non-geometrical ancient broken piece of terracotta, acquired during my years in exile. At the end of the ritual I wrap my long hair around my face, lie down and place the candle on my abdomen. My intention was for this to create both an image of warmth and the image of a hole in my body, referencing a re-birth and a non-space

that invokes rest, peace, silence and infinity away from traumas, losses and dislocations.¹¹

I opened the discussion about *Rupture* earlier by stating the traumas I will be dealing with in the performance: the rupture of a country and, within it, the rupture of a family, the rupture of a marriage and the rupture of bodily health. I mentioned the importance of the rituals involved in mourning the past in order to heal, to reclaim the future and regain agency, which then may become the first step in the discussion towards what home and belonging may mean in the context of ruptured personal and collective histories. In this final episode of *Rupture* the reconciliation with past traumas and memories is visually achieved in the performance through the metaphor for mourning (hair wrapped around the face) and metaphor for re-birth (candle placed on the body in the womb area) in the core, central part of the body, the womb, genetically and medically existing to give life, to give birth, to reproduce, yet in this case unable to do that due to the previously experienced trauma of illness. This sharing of the intimate autobiographic fact and a piece of traumatic medical history inscribed in the body, which connects the trauma and decay of the body with the trauma and decay of the land, is revealed to the audience through the use of ritualistic performance installation, film and sound. The shared intimacy adds another layer – and perhaps the power – to the performance through the heightened, charged relationship between the performer and audience, born out of the sharing of deeply personal material. This may therefore be a suitable moment to introduce the first fragment of performative writing (layer four, as described in the opening of this encounter), which I suggest we imagine happening in parallel to the performance, as a meta-exchange, directly following the final ritualistic episode in *Rupture* described above.

Interlude 1.

A pause.

Choreographing intimacy 1:

‘Small things can throb in our insides for a long time, like a living, scratching creature, or a rotten piece of meat, playing dark arpeggios, against memory, through time. It’s almost the end and I come very close to you, for the first time, I can feel your breath and the temperature of your body. Now that I have told you all, I can do it. An hour ago I couldn’t, I’m sure you understand. I’m telling you about the past, that it has a taste and a feel in the upper stomach. That it smells of a large corridor with leather shoes, combined with green, dusty, Mediterranean rain. That it has a gesture, a blue movement, like brushing something off your left shoulder – I show it to you, you are smiling. Perhaps because I’m doing it so slowly, or perhaps because I’m so close to you. You have forgiven me, then, for opening these wounds to you, without asking permission for it first. For sharing with you what it’s like to hold a piece of your own body in your palms. For telling you what it’s like to return and remember, over and over again.’

Potentially abject biological material (dissected uterus) has been introduced to the audience in the final episode, and even though this climax in the performance has been reached gradually, it still may be unsettling for an audience to witness. This may be due to the fact that physical, visceral trauma of the body is something with which everyone can associate, considering we have all experienced, in one form or another, the tearing of the flesh. The physical dialogue between my hands and the preserved uterus is accompanied with the sound of wailing Serbian women songs and images of

war-torn burned buildings that I filmed in central Belgrade, which makes the connection between the trauma of the body (individual) and the trauma of the land (collective) very direct and easy to comprehend. The parasitic nature of the cancerous cells spreading in the body, threatening to take over and destroy it, also relates to the spread of the dark, nationalistic, horrific events throughout the land, eventually destroying it, breaking it into pieces. The metaphor of the parasite can be extended to how exiles are perceived by the countries forced to host them. Refugees and other unwanted immigrants are often perceived as a threat, multiplying and spreading through the host country at a speed difficult to control. The choice of the biological material here bares resemblance to the choice of using a large piece of meat manipulated by surgical instruments in the film *Meat*, discussed in *Before the Encounter*, or including a piece of raw meat dripping blood from a hanging surgical instruments installation, mentioned earlier in this chapter, to explore and register the impact of trauma on the body. This is further accentuated by the fact that in this case the specimen has been salvaged from the hospital as post-dissection human waste, and is central to the interpretation of trauma as stored in the body and directly affecting the body. Whilst potentially being difficult to look at for some of the audience, each of the above materials also have the ability to hypnotise the viewer's gaze with its abstract beauty of colours, shapes and textures, or with its detail, which is either exaggerated in size (large piece of meat seen projected on the screen) or otherwise simply inaccessible in everyday life (uterus) and thus fissured from reality. I would merely like to suggest here that, paradoxically, beauty and horror in an image, pleasure and pain related to trauma, or freedom and the curse of exile, may be more intimately fused than might be

initially expected, which, I hope, will gradually become more apparent throughout this thesis.

Before I move away from this brief discussion on the choice of the uterus as an unusual object in *Rupture*, I wanted to highlight that the use of objects and the creation of installations featured in my performance works is intrinsic to my performance-making, which is why *Internal Terrains* will be discussed through the lens of objects in *Encounter Two*. When working on my performance installations and objects it is significant to me that they can also simultaneously exist on their own, apart from the performance. In my works so far the entire sets of my performances could be viewed as installation displays, or almost, to borrow the term from the American visual and performance artist Janine Antoni, as 'hidden performances', although not in the same sense of the phrase as Antoni devised it (Smith 2005: 151). In the case of Antoni, this refers to the instances when she interfered performatively at night with her exhibits displayed in a gallery during the day, e.g. by chewing on them and leaving her teeth marks or bite marks on the material and texture of the sculptures, so that they looked different the next day. I think of my sets and installations as hidden performances more in the sense of the marks left on them by the performance itself and what stories they may contain once I, the performer, leave the performance space they inhabit and the installations are transferred to a gallery. However, the desire and the method in creating them is that, even before I perform with them, they can be seen as hidden performances. This is similar to the way that large and complex installations by Louise Bourgeois can be experienced as visual spaces holding narratives with dramaturgies evolving from them, for example in *Red Room (Parents)* (1994) and *Cell VII* (1998) . Or perhaps my installations can be referred to as 'performances in disguise' in

recognition of the inherent narrative and performative quality I strive for when working on them¹². The strategy here is for the boundary between performance and installation, between performative and visual, to be deliberately blurred and obscured as an attempt to enhance the emotional impact of the work and evoke, for the audience, the feeling of physically inhabiting the work. Dorothy Max Prior in her review of *Rupture*'s sequel *Asphyxia* says that '*Asphyxia* is less a stage set than a sculpted environment, awaiting occupation' (Max-Prior 2010). In *Suspended*, which is the follow up to *Asphyxia*, and in which the entire first episode consists of myself, the performer, suspended in the space awaiting the audience to release me into movement, the question of whether that opening episode is a performance or an installation is deliberately blurred. Indeed, it can be either or both and partly this depends on the course the work will take once the audience enter the space. If the audience choose not to interact with the performer, this is how far the performance will go, i.e. the work will exist as an installation only. If the audience interact with me and release me into movement, the work will take the course of a performance. In *Rupture*, one of the central pieces of the set includes an eerie looking hanging installation consisting of chains, hooks, glockenspiel pieces, meat and surgical instruments, which I have been collecting for years. Left on their own they are a beautiful but menacing reminder of the pains inflicted on the meat of our bodies. However, as soon as I step into the installation, it begins to perform with me, the hanging instruments come alive, tinkling in their metallic vibrations and producing seductive, almost dreamy and gentle sounds.

Some installations in my performance works are in the performance space from the beginning, others are constructed and dismantled in front of the audience, such as the one in *Rupture* which begins as a wedding cake with a figurine of bride and groom

at the top and then reveals a cage underneath, containing a real piece of cake. Through the process of taking the cake out of the cage with my hands, and stuffing my mouth with it, the wedding cake-cage becomes destroyed again and is then displayed in its final state of carnage under the hanging light, a sculptural piece which embodies the actions taken on and around it, as well as the spoken text. The site can be read as a destroyed marriage or perhaps another destroyed unity, a collateral damage which never had a chance to survive under the constant pressure of dislocation in exile. The use of the cage also suggests that marriage as an institution may be yet another form of a repression, similar to the way repressions may be embedded uncannily in the notions of home, belonging, cultural heritage or the nation.



Figure 4: Images from *Rupture*: surgical installation and cage-cake, photos by Jacob Patterson.

Asphyxia

Asphyxia is the second part of my autobiographical solo trilogy about identity, migration, body and memory, continuing the themes explored in *Rupture* and investigating further the breaks in inner and outer material and spiritual circles (family and nation/country), migration, life and death, health and illness. As the name of the performance suggests, it focuses on the real and metaphorical situations in life which may lead to suffocation, whether it be due to personal or social life, traumas from the past, memory of abuse, or the stress related to crossing borders. As part of the development process I displaced myself by travelling to South America for visual and content references of trauma, dislocation and death. Argentina and Chile are both nations collectively in recovery, as they still embody the trauma of ‘the disappeared’ and the dictatorships by Videla and Bignone in Argentina and Pinochet in Chile,¹³ whilst in the Peruvian Andes, due to the high altitude, I experienced physically on a daily basis what it is like not to be able to breathe fully. For a part of the research I was joined by my collaborator Bob Karper, composer and film-maker, to collect material for the three short films we shot there. We searched for high altitude locations and finally discovered the isolated island of Taquile in Lake Titicaca, the highest lake on Earth. It was also interesting for us that the island, still fairly cut off from the ‘modern world’, with no cars and only limited electricity, contained pre-Inca ruins and was in addition used at one point in history as a Spanish Colony prison, thus itself embodying the elements of ritual, trauma and dislocation.

It was crucial that on the island we discovered a naturally eroded steep staircase of more than five hundred steps made of stone, although the material existed in a hybrid

unison with the fertile vegetation of the island. The staircase starts from a small dock and leads to the village in the centre of the small island on top of the hill. The climb takes twenty minutes if acclimatised to the local altitude, but it can easily take sixty breathless minutes if one is not used to it. Although this particular staircase has an obvious purpose – it is the only way to reach the village – due to the uneven height of its steps there is an inevitable association with Bruce Nauman’s sculpture installation *Stairway* on a hill in Northern California on a piece of land above the Russian River, commissioned by Nancy and Steven Oliver. At a glance Nauman’s *Stairway* looks just like an ordinary staircase coming down the hill, albeit disturbing the logical topography of the place, if we take into account that a hill is not normally descended using stairs. When viewed in close-up, however, the sculpture reveals that each step is of a different height, thus throwing the body into imbalance, as the body can never fully relax into movement. The body needs to negotiate every unpredictable step separately, which for me strongly evokes a very specific feeling of living in exile.¹⁴

Nauman and the Olivers may have had something different in mind with this installation. Perhaps they wanted us, the users of the stairs, to be dislocated sufficiently to have to take each step as it comes and appreciate the moment and the beauty around us. Whatever the interpretation, once you start using the stairs, you have no choice and the dislocation of the step, the feeling of being out-of-balance, requiring extra caution, will occur. As we decided to film me coming down the staircase on Taquile, to make the descent even more imbalanced, I wrapped myself in a porous, long white cloth and covered my face with an old and rusty fencing mask acquired in a Buenos Aires market. Through the editing process we slowed down the footage to resemble how the body itself felt and pulsed in the actual short downwards journey,

not being able to breathe easily in the heat, through the cloth and the mask, in high altitude, with a vision heavily obscured – all metaphors for living in exile. In the performance the film is projected on a light, see-through black curtain, which lends a further airy and almost dizzy quality to the descent. The soundtrack throughout is the real sound of heavy breathing which then disappears, completely silenced, in the last few seconds of the film. The footage provides an abstract backdrop to the difficult and unpredictable exilic experiences of dislocation. Kristeva raises the question whether there are any happy foreigners, before stating: ‘The difficulties the foreigner will necessarily encounter – one mouth too many, incomprehensible speech, inappropriate behaviour – wound him severely, but by flashes’ (Oliver 1997: 266-268). This suggests a long and complicated journey, full of challenges, ahead of anyone dislocated from their natural environment, whether that is by choice or out of unavoidable circumstances, similar to a precarious descent down a long staircase with uneven steps.



Figure 5: Stills from two of the three short films shot on location at Taquile, Lake Titicaca for *Asphyxia*, camera and editing by Bob Karper.

There are several other moments in *Asphyxia* when my breathing is heavily restricted to elucidate a feeling of loss and the trauma of exile. In the middle of the

performance I put an old gas mask on my head and perform an energetic dance to an original and sharp conceptual percussive soundtrack composed by Bob Karper. It only lasts a few minutes, but the mask is old and dysfunctional and instead of supporting the breathing it actually restricts it, which significantly stretches the boundaries within which the body normally functions. A fine balance is required here from my non-dance trained body to complete the vigorous movements and not pass out. The atmosphere becomes especially charged towards the end of the dance when the audience senses the performer's predicament and a relationship of trust suddenly emerges – from my side that it is acceptable to challenge the boundaries of my body with the audience being present and watching, and from its side that I will not push the boundaries 'too far', hurt myself and lose consciousness in front of them. This is a potent metaphor for repetitive returns to the past as well as for the process of accessing traumatic memories themselves, as each journey back in time requires caution, careful testing of the personal limits and mental strength in the present. Previously in the performance the mask itself had actually been used as a video camera, rolling over black and white photographs from distant past, which simultaneously appear behind me on the back wall of the performance space, and thus a connection is established between the past and the lack of breath, through the use of the object (the object that was initially perceived as a video camera is revealed as an actual gas mask). In other words, the inability to breathe there and then in front of the audience is twofold. The action communicates the pain which can be described as political or collective, as it is related to past events and memories, but at the same time specific, individual and biological, as it is concentrated in the lungs and the struggling body of the performer at that very moment. Regardless of its extreme manifestation, or perhaps because of it

(and its ritualistic nature), the act is also very intimate. The pleasure derived, however, is grounded in the act of the body misbehaving, to borrow the expression from Amelia Jones, as a way of ‘escap[ing] the constrictions of the habitus’ (Jones 2014: 3). The habitus here is of course French sociologist Pierre Bordieu’s habitus, a set of categories such as attitude, behaviour, speech and appearance which together reveal someone’s status, education and belonging to a certain social structure (Bourdieu 2000). But habitus can also be interpreted here as a set of rules imposed on an individual belonging to that social structure and so the act of misbehaving, of doing something unusual and challenging, of speaking out, in life or on stage, brings freedom and a sense of pleasure even if the situation at the root of the action may be painful.

The following parallel dialogue or meta-language between the performer and audience attests to one version of what happens in the physical and emotional space between the audience and myself, as performer occupying a misbehaving, unruly body, while I am dancing with a restrictive gas mask on my head.

Interlude 2.

A pause.

Choreographing intimacy 2:

‘Here is my body in turmoil, giving way to the power of suffocation, gravitating towards non-existence. And your body, slightly drawn forward, almost adjusting your breathing to mine, as if we were lovers, with our bodies wrapped in each other, just before falling asleep. As if by doing that you can donate your breath to mine, increase oxygen in my lungs by holding yours altogether. The inner functions and traumas of my body are exposed to you, as I struggle for my breath. It is through the

biology of my body and geography of my breath, more than through the words and confessions, that I am getting naked here before you.'

The deliberate and measured (as much as possible) manipulation of biological functions is pushed to the extreme in the above episode dealing with the traumas stored in the body and thus becomes inseparable, in the context of the performance, from the embodied memories and fissures of the trauma of crossing borders and leaving the country in war for exile. My preparations to be able to execute the physically demanding three-minute dance lasted two months and consisted of rigorous training involving a daily run, swim, yoga and practising choreography, with the aid of choreographer and video artist Gretchen Schiller, suggesting again that with persistent work and discipline, similar to the use of the wobble board in *Rupture*, it is possible to overcome extraordinary difficulties and perhaps lessen the gap between the pain and pleasure of exile. The agency and empowerment are manifested in the fact that the body has learnt how to breathe through a suffocating mask – not just breathe, but also breathe and dance. In *Rupture*, over time the body has mastered balancing on the board – not just balancing, but also speaking and delivering choreographed movement. In life, the parallel can perhaps suggest that the body has developed coping mechanisms with life in exile – not just to cope, but also to speak out and assert itself.

Two other instances of restricted breathing in the performance occur when I fill my mouth with family photographs and when I cover my face with a fencing mask filled with soil as a reference to death. In both cases I, as a performer, am in control, as I can spit the photographs out of my mouth one by one in a rejection of a notion of an oppressive home, and I can remove the mask filled with soil from my face,

symbolically outlining the fact that to be uprooted from the land can also initiate the freedom to breathe fully.



Figure 6: Images and stills from *Asphyxia* at CPT London, photos and camera by Bob Karper.

Like a rabid dog, sensitive to every sound

With a similar performance structure to *Rupture*, in *Asphyxia* I tried to open a gallery of conflicts of identity common to displaced individuals, by returning to and reflecting on situations of sexual abuse, claustrophobic thoughts of death, disempowerment, the way trauma is passed on through generations via wounds, illnesses and lack of communication, or the feelings of guilt related to the moments from the past. It is common for individuals living in exile to carry guilt in their bodies, the guilt vaguely revolving around the fact that they ‘escaped’ war or another disaster, when many other people could not. The sense of guilt is also often mixed with a sense of shame in the new environment based on being related to the area of conflict, and the country which most likely continuously receives unfavourable representations in the press, or serves as a symbol of uncivilised behaviour in ‘civilised times’. Marina Abramović references this feeling in a short video in which she eats an onion and reflects on how much she hates borders and passports, finishing the monologue by

saying 'I am so ashamed of being a Yugoslav' (Abramović 1995). There is also a paradox in the fact that a person may earn the right to remain in their respective country of exile and live there for a long time, but this does not have any effect on them being viewed in any other light from that of their original nationality and original complications which might accompany their status. Jane Blocker acknowledges this in her writings about Ana Mendieta, a Cuban artist who created a significant body of work around the issues of exile while living in the USA, specifically with her *Siluetas Series* (1973-1980).

It seems that, once established in geographic terms, I carry my nationality with me irrespective of where I happen to be. In other words, nationality is first exercised in very literal terms relative to physical location but quickly becomes a metaphoric notion having little to do with material reality. (Blocker 1999: 94)

A situation such as the one highlighted by Blocker points to the way that paths are created through legal and social situations, through habitus and environments, to aid a prolonged embodiment of the trauma of displacement. In *Asphyxia* I crush strawberries with my hands and smear them across my mouth while talking about being ashamed of my background and my citizenship. I say how eagerly I embraced my new surname Davis, abandoning Vučković, the carrier of heavy personal and collective mythology, trauma and memories of loss.¹⁵ I slowly open an old radio box and reveal its internal elements which refer to the organs of a human body, while talking about the fundamental difference of crossing borders as a nationalised British citizen, as opposed to a citizen from the Balkans. I recite a poem *I Would Love to Have a Tiger* – it is a dream of walking in London Fields with another powerful but equally displaced creature in that environment.

Margaret Westby observes accurately and writes eloquently about *Asphyxia*, drawing on feminist theories and the time she spent in *Asphyxia* rehearsals.

In *Asphyxia*, the use of the mouth has numerous and complicated meanings symbolically throughout the performance, already implicated in the actual name of [the] piece. *Asphyxia* is a condition that arises when there is a lack of oxygen to the human body usually by choking or drowning. A connection to the mouth has already begun...the mouth enables one to obtain oxygen to breathe, to speak, and to eat, and thus a challenge is presented on how to allow the mouth to function and resist the choking silence in her performance. [...] There are numerous images in Davis' performance of the mouth; being fed and smeared strawberries, covered by a mask silencing the mouth and causing difficulty to breathe, stuffed with family photographs, and covered again by another mask filled with dirt. All of these images suggest powerful notions of being choked, strangled and silenced by herself as a woman and by her cultural past and surroundings. She brings up these images not for empathy or for a saviour, but to relate to the audience issues she has had to deal with in coming to terms with her family heritage and displacement from her homelands. These images are also brought up so that she can counteract against them. This is where her fight against these elements begins by using her mouth to speak. (Westby 2009: 2)

Trauma implicitly passed on through generations, often expressed through parents' wounds or ill health is a recurrent, subtle theme in my work. Through it I try to reference dislocation, albeit in an unfinished, unsaid manner, such as in the following excerpt from *Asphyxia*, after my father's heart operation and my mother's mastectomy:

'And then, I'm there, in their old people's flat. I look at my father. I thought it would be big, but actually it's a rectangular plate, I can see the shape under his skin, I'm sure it's metal. 'Can I touch it?' He nods, and then his thoughts take a leap in an unusual direction: 'You can touch mother's heart too', he says. 'Are you sure...?' My mother lifts

her shirt slowly and there it is – a fine line over her heart, so subtle, so raw, so perfect, it looks beautiful, as if the breast should have never been there in the first place. Having touched both of their hearts, I look at them, a mythological amalgamic parent creature. My father, a heartless monster, my mother, a barely perceptible hint of sadness, madness.'

(excerpt from *Asphyxia*, 2010)

I present only facts and remain deliberately vague in this and other similar excerpts, and leave it to the audience to interpret in their own way what might be the reason for this disconnection between generations within a family. What we can be certain about is that if there is no clarity of communication with the generation to follow, there is no strategy allowing the possibility to return and revisit the painful history in order to understand, re-interpret and recover, which might suggest that unresolved trauma will continue to be passed on and will continue to be the source of pain.

In a BBC documentary *Hitler's Children* aired on BBC2 on 23 May 2012 about the descendants of key Nazi figures, the trauma passed on to second or third generation appears to be considerably stronger when there is a lack of clear communication between parents and children, thus enhancing the sense of dislocation further. Even when direct and clear communication exists, some personal and cultural heritage is not easy to embody, as it becomes evident through interviews with the subjects in the documentary. One of them has gone as far as to sterilise herself permanently to ensure that actual genes of that particular Nazi war criminal are not further passed on biologically. W.G. Sebald, who has also written about exile in his novel *The Emigrants*, follows the destinies of four Jewish emigrants around the world and seems to suggest

that life in exile leads to isolation, depression and suicide, even though his characters on the surface appear to live meaningful and fulfilled lives. One of the characters, Uncle Aldelwarth, is described as somebody who ‘had an infallible memory, but that, at the same time, he scarcely allowed himself access to it. For that reason, telling stories was as much a torment to him as an attempt at self-liberation’ (Sebald 2002: 100). These examples point towards a connection between ‘speaking out a trauma’ and ‘surviving a trauma’, as psychoanalytical theories from Freud onwards would suggest. Drawing on these I also wished in *Rupture* and *Asphyxia* to indicate the possibility of discovering beauty and pleasure beyond trauma through repetitive returns to the past with a view to integrating painful memories into the present.

Suspended

Suspended is the final part of the autobiographical trilogy. The piece continues with the themes of identity, migration, body and memory. However, the form of the performance is different from the end-on configuration of the previous two performances. Although I believe the previous two pieces achieved intimacy and a close relationship with the audience, I wanted to experiment further and find out whether it would be possible for the audience to take a physical, poetic and metaphorical migration journey with me, in the same space, from one episode and installation to another, investigating marginal spaces and evoking migratory bodies burdened with past memories, present fears and future anxieties. I was also searching for ways in which to involve the audience more directly in the piece and attempting to discover if there was a logical way in which they could participate. *Suspended* has, as a

result, developed as a performance which eliminates the boundaries of space for the audience and draws the viewer into the surreal world inhabited by the performer.

If living in the liminal space between two worlds, can one of them ever become home? How do memories preserve identity? Where is memory located if I am always in-between, always experiencing a position of liminality? The performance opens with me suspended in the space in a long gown reaching the ground, with my hair rigged to the ceiling with 44 strings, one for each year of my life at that time. I am in that position when the audience walk in, centre-stage, the hazer and original soundtrack evoking what I wanted to be an otherworldly atmosphere. This is a position of beauty and power but also vulnerability and *status quo*. I am stuck. A careless move could unroot my hair directly from my scalp. My intentions are obvious – I hold a large pair of scissors in my hands. All this is visible to the audience and the performer. The following interlude, the final one in this encounter, describes what cannot be seen, or is at least less obvious, but is nevertheless intimately present in the space between the performer and the audience.

Interlude 3.

A pause.

Choreographing intimacy 3:

‘I’m suspended in the air, floating in the darkness, my long black cloak reaching the ground, merging with the floor, merging with the blackness of the space. When I was little a teacher said the colour black didn’t really exist, how can that be, I thought.

You don’t know it, but I’ve been in this position for almost two hours before you came in. It all started with Bernd, Marty, Azusa and Bob tying 44 strings to my hair, then

Elisa arranging the heavy cloak around me, every single wave on it. Then Marty focused a pale, almost invisible ray of light around it on the ground, the only trace of non-blackness between you and me, begging you not to come any closer, lest I fall. Then there was a choreography of ladders around me, with Marty as a chief conductor directing people left and right, an eagle-eye making sure no ladder touches the hair stretched already in place, as they are rigging one string by one. And a pentatonic scale of 'Are you alright?', 'How is your back?', 'Do you need anything?', 'Let me know if you feel dizzy', 'It will be over soon', gentle, soothing. My feet are cold, touching a rung of the high ladder on which I am suspended. I am reminded of another three pairs of ladders in Marina Abramović's 'The House with the Ocean View' with rungs made of knives.¹⁶ Bernd puts socks on my feet, I trust gratefully he will remember to take them off me before we start.

Then ladders are out of the way, the space gradually becomes quieter and clean, final tuning and hands squeezed, wishes whispered, haze comes on, soundtrack comes on, and then I am completely alone for twenty minutes, as everyone takes their positions. I am waiting for you...

You don't know it, but I was thirsty just before you came in, and Bob climbed up and handed me a cubic centimeter wet sponge on a stick, like a lollypop to suck on, as if I were in a hospital bed, just after the operation. No liquid between an hour before the set-up starts and the end of the show – four hours in total, as the costume and the position do not allow water to be passed. It's fine, now that you are here I don't mind the thirst, I don't mind my mild fear of heights. But waiting for you, I always forget I will not be able to see you! As the darkness is gradually permeated with haze, with narrow profile lights in my eyes, positioned carefully just above your heads, so that

you can see but not be distracted by them, the sound of jars rolling, the sound of glass and metal getting louder, riffing and then roaring through my body, I still can't see you.

You stay away at first, careful not to disturb my fragile balance, that could crumble away at the gentlest touch. You gaze at me and I gaze at the space where your energy is suspended. Because I can't see anything – my hearing and my sense of smell instantly grow sharper. It's almost like the whole of me becomes visceral, it's like my skin can sense you in the darkness. I feel you in the deepest, farthest, most sensitive layers of my skin, as if I were sixteen and in love for the first time. I can feel your parted lips and a silent gasp in your breath, I ride on the feeling, not knowing if any harm will come from you. Focused and charged, deliberately very slow, I pass scissors on to you and Bob brings the steps for you to climb on, to be able to reach me, and to make a single cut. Then I can finally see you. What can you see? Can you feel the tension and the stillness competing in my body?

It is important to note that I am not the only one in the space to feel disoriented. The audience have been stripped of their bags, led into a dark room with no seats for them, with haze, a loud soundtrack and a person suspended in the middle of the space. Not knowing exactly where they should position themselves, they arrange themselves wherever they can find space around me.

I start cutting the strings that I can reach myself and then offer the scissors to the audience. In order for me to be released into movement, the audience are first silently invited to finish cutting my hair in order to 'free' me. To navigate exilic journeys it is inevitable to rely on the help of strangers – some of them will be well-meaning and cut

just about enough hair to help the release, some others will cut in the middle or close to the scalp and then the hair will require more time to grow back. Strings are left to hang in the space amongst the audience, with bits of my hair attached to the bottom of each – evoking the sensation that if someone is displaced from their original environment a piece of them will always stay behind. For the rest of the performance we will all be walking through the forest of these strings, they will be brushing our faces, occasionally getting in the way of our bodies and footsteps, steady reminders of past events, memories, traumas. Said's seminal text *Reflections on Exile* begins, no doubt informed by his own experience of exile, by stating:

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. (Said 2000: 173)

My intention in the trilogy of works *Rupture*, *Asphyxia* and *Suspended* was, however, not only to question loss but also to investigate the notions of belonging and home. I was interested in these issues in the context of identity and exile, and was also curious to balance them against the potential pleasures of exile, such as a certain sense of freedom from the past and from authority, from the codes of behaviour inscribed on a specific nation or a family within it, which we then perform throughout our lives. I was interested to explore through my works whether the past can be erased or rejected, at least to a degree, or transformed, processed into a new path commencing from something fresh. How would that happen? Can the pain of exile be processed and

transformed into the pleasure of exile, or do they merely exist alongside each other?

And what possible freedoms and restraints might be associated with the 'new path' or the pleasures of exile?

Said himself also immediately poses a challenging, contradictory question: 'but if true exile is a condition of terminal loss, why has it been transformed so easily into a potent, even enriching, motif of modern culture?' (173). The conversation around these issues outlines a crucial contradiction in the understanding and representation of exile, which is of extreme importance for my work. As Blocker notices: 'Like the nation, exile is more than a location (or, more precisely, a lack of location). It is a product of a set of meanings that both engage and undermine the narrative of the nation' (Blocker 1999: 27) . As such, dislocation perhaps carries the potential to become a potent and charged place, or a moment in time, to sever what was previously imposed on an individual such as legal and social ties to a specific place and nation, based on the random square meter of their birth – the conditions which define us and impact on us. Can the condition of dislocation carry in itself a seed of freedom? I connect metaphorically Said's phrase 'terminal loss' directly to the condition of terminal illness explored in *Rupture* and the association between the decay of the body and decay of the land. However, when dealing with loss in my trilogy, I tend to use, or even stage, images of strength in the adversity of loss, such as the opening episode of *Suspended* in which my body is suspended in the space, or the way I balance on apples or unravel a long blue silk across the performance space, as will be described in the segments to follow. This is enhanced with the use of sound, lighting, installations, objects and materials, and the ritualistic nature of choreography, although none of these are supposed to take away from or romanticise the harrowing subjects or

harshness of the themes such as life in exile, bodily harm or loss of citizenship. I will discuss this in more detail in Encounter Two, while reflecting on the development of *Internal Terrains* and the very process of creating new material through practice-as-research, dealing with memory and trauma, as well as the pain and pleasure of exile.

In the place where I was born, nobody is waiting for me

Once all my hair is cut and I am free, the performance assistant helps me walk out of the long gown and down the structure/ladder which was holding me in the space. I retrieve a large black sack from under the gown, which I carry with me to the next installation – a wooden box. The audience walk with me. I spill dozens of apples from the sack onto the box and step on them, a number of apples falling off and creating thumping sounds, a residue of loss. This is a difficult episode to perform. I am raised in the space, just a bit too high for a jump off the apples, completely unbalanced as the fruit below me keeps moving and never settles, my feet hurt trying to remain in the position. I am, at the same time, singing about the fact that in the place where I was born nobody is waiting for me and need to remain sufficiently close to the hanging microphone in order for my voice to be recorded in this sequence. As a result the song appears extremely fragile and this, in turn, paradoxically becomes its strength. It is in English and Serbo-Croatian, looped throughout via a loop station connected to the microphone, an instrument which creates multiple layers of voice endlessly repeating and merging with each other, another residue of loss. This fragment evokes the unbalancing condition of not belonging to either the past home or the new home. The condition can be unsettling, dislocating and traumatic, but it can also provide a kind of

freedom from expectations associated with either home, and this can be sensed in the improvisational freedom of the sounds and song coming from me while negotiating the apples and the height of the chest on which I placed myself. Kristeva sums this situation up succinctly: 'Rejection on the one hand, inaccessibility on the other: if one has the strength not to give in, there remains a path to be discovered' (Oliver 1997: 267). Alban Ukaj, Albanian actor born in Kosovo and living and working in Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina (both in former Yugoslavia), whom I interviewed for my documentary film *Berlin-Sarajevo* (still in production), talks about belonging and the fact that he still, after so many years, feels like a foreigner in Sarajevo, but that he enjoys the feeling and even prefers to feel that way, both in his new home in Bosnia and in his former home in Kosovo. He says that, for him, being a foreigner enhances the feeling of freedom.

This freedom, however, is closely related to having a citizenship and being able to exercise it openly, both at home and abroad. In one episode in *Suspended*, I speak in Serbo-Croatian, mixed with English, about establishing myself administratively in a new land. The text I deliver is the original text from the procedure of suing Croatia at the court of justice to recognise me as a Croatian citizen, following the fall of Yugoslavia. The majority of the audience do not understand the Serbo-Croatian text word for word, but from the tone they understand its bureaucratic nature, while English parts of the text help to make it understood that I, as the main protagonist, have become just a number in yet another long and difficult to comprehend Kafkaesque process. This number is in a direct dialogue with the long number I came to be through a complex medical process which was explored in the first part of the trilogy *Rupture*. Brison coins a phrase 'speech acts of memory' and argues that:

[...] working through, or remastering, traumatic memory (in the case of human-inflicted trauma) involves a shift from being the object or medium of someone else's (the perpetrator's) speech (or other expressive behaviour) to being the subject of one's own. (Brison 1999: 39).

In other words, according to Brison, in order to regain agency and to heal, the subject needs to locate the trauma and express it, speak about it and speak out – this is how we refuse, liberate ourselves from, and recover from victimisation and objectification. Maya Angelou thought that '[t]here [was] no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you'.¹⁷ Angelou herself kept repeating her story of the struggle she had to go through as a Black woman in the USA and through the telling of her story both ensured her own self-empowerment and provided inspiration for many other marginalised voices. In agreement with Brison and Angelou, Deirdre Heddon claims that '[t]he telling of stories about oneself is part of the construction of an identity for that self' (Heddon 2008: 35). Through that construction of identity, alongside recognising our traumas and losses, we can perhaps create an opportunity for ourselves to create an identity of choice, an identity that suits us, an identity not imposed on us by states, nations or bureaucratic powers, an identity that offers freedom of choice and is closer to what we really feel we may be. I use telling stories about myself as a performance strategy to integrate painful memories from my past into my present and to establish my agency in all three parts of the trilogy. This is of course not a new strategy and its effectiveness has been tested by a number of feminist, queer, disabled and other experimental and socially engaged solo performers across disciplines from the 1970s onwards, such as Laurie Anderson, Linda Montano, Tim Miller, Ron Athey and others in the USA and Ursula Martinez, SuAndi, Sheila

Ghelani, Stacy Makishi and others in the UK. They used the strategy of ‘personal as political’ to bring to light personal experiences of being marginalised from mainstream society and to strengthen themselves as individuals through that process.

To illustrate and complement the above discussion further, I will employ a final split text, in which a piece of the poetic meta-language is accompanied by more analytic writing. Together they focus on the survivalist spirit and construction of an exilic identity as a positive force against the loss and dislocation of exile. The same rules apply as with the two previous split text excerpts: they can only be read one by one, in either order. Each combination of the texts will have its own advantages and disadvantages, its own gains and losses.

*I am my hair and my nails
my teeth, my x-rays
my liquids, my summer and winter bones,
my memories – I hold on to them.
I wash the jars and dirty, sticky, ugly spaces
become clean and new
I am clean and new Me
I bite my nail and put it in a jar
I pull my hair and put it in a jar
I take a piece of me and put it in a jar
a tooth, skin cut through, saliva,
a womb of my infertile land
I knock on people's doors
ask for a jar
and tell them my story.*
(excerpt from *Suspended*, 2011)

A major installation in the *Suspended* space is a beautifully lit (with its own wired lights) piece of furniture with shelves, which also had its own migration journey from another continent. Its wood is battered and chipped, it has a patina of survival. It is heavy, it demands respect and strong muscles to move around. It is filled with more than a hundred jars, which I had been collecting from recycling and rubbish bins for months. The piece is called *Izazov* (Challenge) and has been inspired by Louise Bourgeois' installation *Le Défi* – ‘a haunting assemblage of collected objects that trigger memory and association’ (Spector 2002: 60). *Le Défi* also contains pieces of glass. However, as opposed to my glass collected from junk, Bourgeois' pieces

are extremely beautiful objects, acquired by herself, or passed on to her from her family. Nancy Spector maintains further about this piece to say that ‘the open, transparent vessels in this work signify, for Bourgeois, the courage to reveal feelings of inadequacy, fear and loneliness’ (60). Ordinary and worthless pieces of glass in my installation are a comment on the identity of migratory bodies and the difficulty of taking things into exile. My glass pieces are filled with personal objects (such as photographs, jewellery and medals), substances and materials (salt, metal, wax and grass), and organic bodily materials (hair, nails, teeth) before being presented in the glory of a cabinet of curiosities in order to honour the memories of people, places and things that are lost to us. In addition, the objects in the glass are used performatively. I put medals from the glass jars on a uniform hanging in the space. I take jewellery from the jars, with photographs of my ancestors attached decoratively, to mark my migration journey on the geographical map, which is first hidden in the military coat, and then exposed on the wall of the performance space. I take a jar filled with salt to create a protective circle around me. Glass is a conscious choice of material here as it is fragile, but essentially sound. Jars especially embody a combined sense of fragility and endurance – they are not easy to break. Sheila Ghelani, London-based artist of mixed British and Indian heritage, uses glass in her participatory performance installation *Covet Me Care for Me* (2007), which is about a heart-break, the loss of love. In this interactive piece the audience are invited to choose one heart out of the fifty on offer and smash it with a hammer. In order to do that they go through a ritualistic journey from putting on protective clothing, gloves and visor to receiving the objects from the heart, wrapped up as a special gift for them. It is surprising that in every performance

there will be an instance or two of an audience member pounding on the fragile glass-heart with a heavy duty hammer and not being able to break it.



Figure 7: Objects from *Suspended*, images by Natasha Davis.

In the final episode of *Suspended* I very slowly crawl through the space, as a body inscribed by migration and the experiences of exile, amongst the audience, on my back and shoulderblades, splitting the audience in two halves, accompanied by an epic live piano piece composed by Bob Karper. The movement of the shoulders that allows me to gradually crawl across the performance space is so internal that it barely exits the body. Wrapped in meters and meters of lush blue material, my form becomes triangular as the cloth keeps unfolding and creating an image of ascending in the space horizontally, evoking a range of metaphorical references around the body, memory, displacement and survival, and referencing both personal and collective or historical memories and traumas. Matt Truman calls it:

[...] slow and steady, considered and calm – though not without effort – it suggests a coming to terms. Perhaps, in that balance of

peace and exertion, movement without discomfort, Davis is suggesting a happy medium. (Truman 2010)

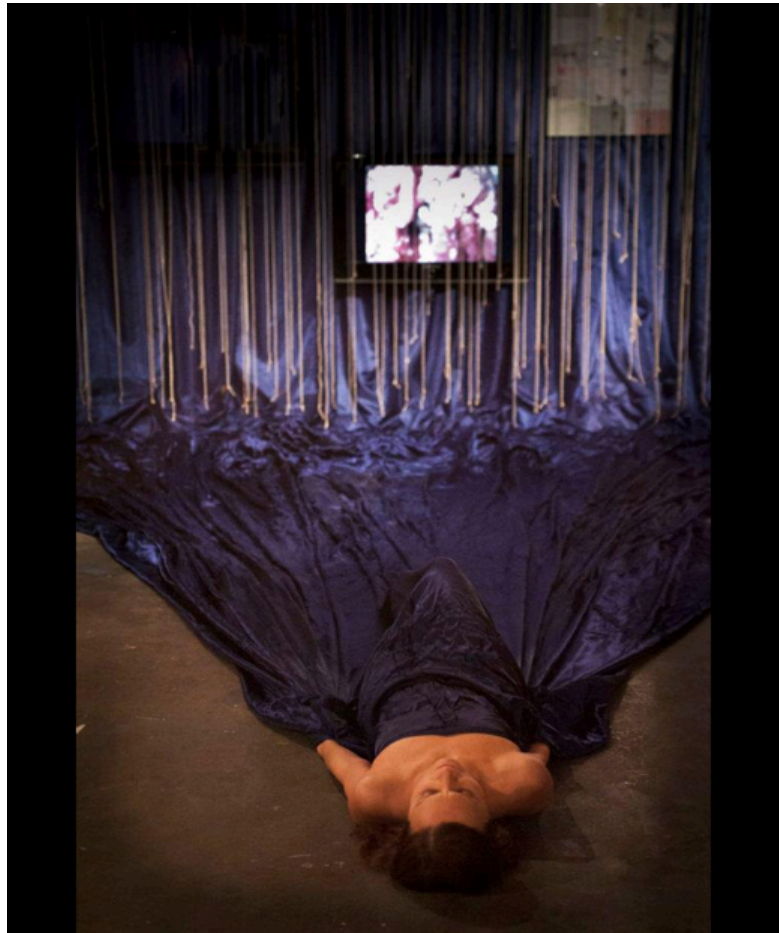


Figure 8: *Suspended (Unrooted)* performance installation at Rochelle Galleries as part of Platforma, image by Eburne Aginaga.

My intention was to negotiate the concept of temporality through a deliberately excruciatingly slow and meditative movement which challenges the viewer and their patience. I also wanted to stretch the concept further by referencing the time extending between birth and death, and to suggest the negotiation of the pain and trauma of the generations preceding us. Most importantly, this slowly evolving episode, layered through the visual effect, the texture and materiality of the cloth, the sound, and the minimal choreographed movement, is about being dislocated in time, as much as in

place. With the blue cloth forming itself in a triangular shape, as an extension of my body, it points towards an invisible foundation of traumas we carry in our lives, suggesting that trauma accumulates in time and potentially over several generations. The lushness of the blue silk is a particular and deliberate choice challenging the viewer to negotiate the beauty of the otherwise painful body progression on the floor, which will undoubtedly leave marks and scratches on the skin, referencing again the trauma and pleasure of exile as inseparable.

After the trilogy

The trilogy of works *Rupture*, *Asphyxia* and *Suspended* collectively represents research into the impact of the trauma of exile and migration on the body, memory and identity. It uses movement, poetic text, installations and sonic material to investigate the loss and the pain and pleasure of living in exile. As a creator and performer I place myself in fragile and vulnerable situations of in-betweenness and imbalance both as a strategy to reach the material inscribed in my own body and as a visual metaphor to communicate the material to the audience viscerally and engage their emotions. In order to access relevant autobiographical material I continuously return to the source of my own personal trauma and to the historical trauma of the country where I was born and across whose territories a civil war erupted in the early 1990s. Through the practical and theoretical research I am concerned both with the personal and the historical, although the truth I am interested in accessing is poetic rather than documentary. Setting up the relationship of intimacy with the audience plays an important role in allowing these methodologies to work. The trilogy, however,

does not offer a solution, a conclusion or even just a suggestion around what a possible home, as a more permanent place that does not necessarily need to be confined to a single geographical spot, can be or can look like for those who have been migrating for years and will not be returning to the place of their origin. As a way forward, the next encounter and the PaR project *Internal Terrains* will focus more closely on the question whether such a kind of home can be established, whether that is possible and even necessary, and, if it is possible, what kind of conditions need to be met first. *Encounter Two* will also put into practice the findings of the critical analysis of the trilogy and place this at the start and at the heart of the practical enquiry. The research will pay particular attention to: repetitions and returns, imbalancing and fragmented associations in order to better understand how these methodologies work in creating the performance and what kind of new knowledge they may generate through practice-as-research.

Encounter Two

About practice-as-research methodology

I begin this encounter by contextualising my practice in relation to current scholarship and methodologies regarding practice-as-research. Within the scope of this thesis I will however neither attempt to provide a detailed analysis nor a survey of achievements in this area so far. Even though PaR in performance is a relatively new phenomenon, in recent years more has been written and published about it in the field and it would not be possible to give this subject full justice within a segment of one chapter. What I would like to do here instead is reflect upon selected current PaR knowledge in the field in terms of its usefulness and clarity for the development of my own research through practice. In this way I am also acknowledging that my own learning and the shaping of my own methodologies have been informed by combined practical and theoretical knowledge. My practical learning encompasses the knowledge obtained from various embodied performance, art and physical training such as voice and movement, creative writing, playing music, photography, filming, editing, yoga, meditation, running, interaction with objects and similar, which I draw on and use as research methodologies in the process of making, rehearsing and performing. Theoretical learning would involve anything from watching and analysing visual, sound and live work to critical reading of performance and art theory, philosophy, psychology, literature, cultural theory, science and other disciplines. Responding to and being informed by theory and using practice-as-research are completely intertwined in my working methodologies.

PaR as a viable research methodology in theatre and performance departments at universities has in recent years been gaining momentum and confidence; however it is

still not widely accepted and the level of acceptance varies across different geographical regions. If we take a look at the range of universities where it is possible for PhD students to actually submit their practical research as an equal, rather than additional, part of their thesis, the picture becomes even narrower. For example, in the USA there are only two institutions that currently allow this possibility: University of California, Davis and the University at Buffalo. As a practitioner I am of course interested in PaR not only in a university and academic context; however, the scarcity noted above does signify that there is still a large space open to artists and scholars to continue to provide useful models of PaR ways of thinking. The United Kingdom has been a leading force in identifying and highlighting PaR as a valid research methodology at universities, alongside countries such as Finland, Australia and isolated universities in Europe, South Africa, New Zealand and Canada. Scholars and artists such as Annette Arlander (2010), Shannon Rose Riley (2009), John Freeman (2010), Baz Kershaw (2000) and others have written about new possibilities opening up and challenges associated with PaR. Why is there still resistance from mainstream academia in accepting PaR as a valid PhD submission, considering the extremely practical nature of the performing arts as a discipline? What is the root of the doubt attached to the validity of knowledge emerging from practical research? Robin Nelson (2013) lists possible reasons: in particular, the difficulty in assessing the work using traditional assessment methods, as well as general scepticism that PaR as a methodology can generate significant new knowledge. Nelson recognises that '[the] model does require a shift in established thinking about what constitutes research and knowledge, but it has proven to work for a considerable number of colleagues and students' (Nelson 2013: 8). He admits, however, that PaR can be tough both on students and

supervisors/assessors, as it 'require[s] more labour and a broader range of skills to engage in a multi-mode research enquiry than more traditional research processes', although he also makes a passionate case that PaR 'when done well, demonstrate[s] an equivalent rigour' (9). It is worth mentioning here that PaR may be equally challenging for researchers already working in academia, from formulating the research, to raising funds for projects, and finally presenting it and justifying its value as part of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) as required in the United Kingdom¹⁸. Nelson's writing is clear in justifying the epistemological value of PaR; however I have found his analysis more useful as an emerging scholar – for framing the value of my practical research within the scholarly requirements and better understanding of the assessment of PaR work in higher education – than as an artist using practice to access and generate new knowledge. In other words, Nelson's guidance is quite efficient in providing a framework of references on how to build procedures and justify and assess the knowledge emerging from PaR, but not in illuminating how to generate knowledge through PaR. Regarding new knowledge itself, some of the case studies he provides have been more helpful and informative to me than his theory of PaR, such as the site-specific project *Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain* by Lee Miller and Bob Whalley and a record of philosopher Jacques Derrida grappling with the meaning of text in his own PhD research, as they more directly focus on the actual process of making.

In their recent publication *Performing Proximity: Curious intimacies*, Helen Paris and Leslie Hill, Associate Professors at Stanford University and co-directors of their performance company *Curious*¹⁹, provide a unique angle of looking at PaR, as they write eloquently and poetically about their performance practice in the context of practice-based and practice-led research²⁰. This is a particularly valuable contribution

to the field not least since Hill and Paris are both practitioners and scholars. They specifically highlight the fact that they are ‘artists first and scholars second in terms of chronology’ and that the projects they write about in the book ‘were not conceived as research projects’ (Hill and Paris 2014: 2). What emerges however is that:

Although the performance work discussed in this book was not undertaken as ‘research’ per se, recurring questions run through it which lend themselves, dozens of projects later, to discussion within the context of practice-based research. (3)

What Paris and Hill wish to emphasise is that they do not set out to embark on specific scholarly research through practice. They instead create performance works around questions of interest to them at the time, and then analyse later the work from a scholarly point of view, in the context of their whole body of work, taking into account the knowledge that seems to generate repeatedly through their performance research and practice and how that might be in dialogue with emergent projects. As an artist, I can certainly testify to how much of, especially initial artistic research is often intuitive and not defined through specific research questions (often a crucial requirement in scholarly research), although this will, in one way or another, be clarified later through the process. If not earlier, then surely research questions will be identified by the time an application for a grant to external bodies is being formulated or marketing and documentation material compiled. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Nelson suggests the term ‘research enquiry’ rather than research questions, as more appropriate for PaR (Nelson 2013: 96-97). The essential premise of Hill and Paris’ *Performing Proximity: Curious intimacies*, that a body of work and its analysis over time can significantly contribute to the theory and acquisition of specific knowledge, fundamentally underpins my thinking and processes in *Encounter One*.

The approach in *Encounter One* was epistemologically different from what I am attempting to achieve in this encounter with *Internal Terrains*, the performance that I am submitting as a practical component of my research. Theoretical and critical analysis in *Encounter One* came after the work was created, although it was to a degree based on my readings, references, reflective writing and notes at the time of making. The aim of the process with which I am experimenting here is not to find a magical formula which resolves how theory and practice can merge seamlessly, but rather to capitalise on the findings in *Encounter One* and existing PaR theory and practices and be open to the emergence of new valid methodologies and strategies during the process of making *Internal Terrains*.

Regarding methodologies in general that could be of use to researchers employing PaR, some ideas exist in publications such as *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance* edited by Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson (2011), which offers examples like spatial thinking, tacit knowledge, embodied understanding and so on. *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research*, edited by Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter (2009), adds a few more, such as action research, disjunction, situated knowledge and others. Perhaps one of the reasons for the lack of clear and particular guidance around how to commence and frame PaR is related to the fact that each artist may need to negotiate afresh their own ways of working, their own methodologies and their own specific contexts of enquiry. A good example of this is Annette Arlander's case study *Performing Trees: Landscape and Artistic Research* in the publication *Blood, Sweat and Theory* edited by John Freeman (2010), which I found both inspiring and illuminating. In this project, as a practitioner and scholar, Arlander is looking for 'imaginary models for the relationship of human beings and the environment' with a

view to extracting suitable strategies for making site-specific work (Arlander 2010: 173). She identifies contrast, confluence and camouflage as ‘options of the visual relationship between performer and landscape’, but questions whether these models can be applied to other works and the relationship with environment in other contexts. Similarly, I have identified useful strategies for creating work through the making of my trilogy as discussed in *Encounter One* and will be testing the wider application and usefulness of repetitive returns, placing my body out-of-balance and creating fragmentary intimate and autobiographical episodes, as strategies to create work dealing with crossing borders and the trauma of migration, in *Internal Terrains* and in general.

There is a need not only to expand on methodologies and epistemological understanding of PaR, but also to keep finding the language that describes them accurately – a language which is precise and clear enough, so that discoveries made can be understood and implemented by students, practitioners and scholars alike. Students starting PaR research are often at a loss as to what methodologies for research are available to them. When they engage with theory exploring this issue, they often find the information confusing, insufficient and convoluted. Perhaps it is the case that PaR methodologies, in order to be related clearly, require a full documentation of the process, a case study, or even a workshop demonstration. A useful illustration of this would be an unpublished record of Daniel Mroz’s laboratory experimentation at the University of Ottawa as part of *Les Atelier* project that Mroz presented at the American Association for Theatre Research (ASTR) conference in Baltimore in November 2014 as part of the PaR working group. In this paper Mroz provides an account and context for his practical research *Luo Shu Ji Xing*, emerging from laboratory experiments and

building on his previous work that combined choreography in contemporary dance with martial arts techniques. He describes in detail a series of choreographic, musical and writing tasks and decisions employed, in addition to using improvisation and elements from Chinese cosmology, to create new work. This study offers an interesting model for how results of PaR research could be shared with practitioner and non-practitioner audiences and readers and how PaR can contribute to the expansion of the knowledge in the field. It also raises practical and philosophical questions around the field of enquiry changing through the process of research and how this new path, examined retrospectively, contributes to the PaR analysis.

In *What a Body Can Do: Technique as knowledge, practice as research* (2015), a study of techniques used to generate knowledge through PaR, Ben Spatz proposes that practice cannot call itself research if it does not generate a new technique of making work that can be taught like any other practical knowledge. His focus is on embodied practices; however I have found his approach limited, rigid and more applicable to acting than performing arts or time-based practices. I am not disputing the usefulness of the knowledge acquired or mastered through performance techniques such as ballet dancing and Stanislavsky's school of acting or the practice of yoga for PaR. Indeed, I have used breath and its meditative and repetitive quality, as well as the skills and physical and mental strength deriving from the practice of yoga and long-distance running extensively in my own practice. What I found problematic in his approach is his extreme focus on physical and embodied skills at the expense of concepts such as time or space and specific states as methodologies. In the middle of his argument he surprises me, in Chapter Four, by recognising gender as technique in developing new work, which corresponds to my use of crossing borders and displacement as

methodologies (Spatz 2015: 171-214). By doing this he connects techniques that can be learned using repetition and self-discipline, such as method acting or yoga, with something that is part of everyday life. In this way he points to the fact that belonging (to a social background, nation or gender), as well as other states and cultural practices are performative and can be learned, as Judith Butler and Pierre Bourdieu, for example, explored in regards to gender (Butler) and habitus (Bourdieu). Spatz agrees with Nelson that original contribution in new techniques or methodology does not need to be as defining as, for example, new methodologies developed in the twentieth century by Pina Bausch, Eugenio Barba, Jerzy Grotowski and so on, but insists on the necessity of a new technique emerging from all practical research and distances himself from any approach that he perceives as unnecessarily ephemeral and transient in analysing live work. This approach is not compatible with my own practical research, as it does not appear to value the very process of enquiry and constant negotiation of strategies throughout it as much as creating formulaic techniques, which need to prove their transferability to another project and may, as a result, run the risk of becoming an end to itself.

When talking about the external validity of practical research at the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR-FIRT) conference at the University of Warwick in July 2014, dance practitioner and scholar Pil Hansen proposed that the strength of practice is not in the methodologies it uses but in its interdisciplinarity. I interpreted this as the ability of the performing arts to combine effectively different languages both internally, across the media such as film and sound, and externally across the disciplines such as art and science. While these ways of working are likely to generate new innovative methodologies through the hybrid nature of the research, I also believe

in the scholarly validity of methodologies used in PaR within one single discipline, i.e. that methodologies used in PaR can be as rigorous as any used in theoretical research and can produce as sound and significant new knowledge as any new theoretical research can. This of course does not mean that in my research I do not regularly also use more traditional and tested methods such as case studies, interviews, analysis of existing theory, literature surveys, archive research and so on, when required. All of these have been useful in my own research. Nevertheless I am convinced I would not have accessed new knowledge through my work without using less traditional but equally valid and distinctly practical methodologies such as body memory, physical training, pushing the boundaries of the body, automatic writing, poetic expression, meditation, ritual, embodied autobiographical experience, making the tacit explicit and so on, as I am hoping *Encounter One* has already documented to some extent. The philosophy behind many of these methods is not difficult to penetrate and is simply embedded in doing (doing something physical) first and finding out what it means either during the process of doing it, or at some point later. In this way the action precedes the meaning. Ron Athey, USA live art practitioner based in London and Los Angeles, has collaborated extensively with the scholar Dominic Johnson about connecting practice with theory. In interview with Johnson, Athey says about his process of making that his pieces are usually not ‘defined clearly in advance [...], they come out of posing a tough, philosophical question that [he] work[s] through in the process of making’ (Johnson 2012: 531). Additionally, in my personal case – of being a dislocated individual, a foreigner, a non-native speaker – it is precisely the doing which has given me the language, vocabulary, awareness and self-confidence to formulate research enquiries in the first place, and begin to discuss them openly through

performance works in front of audiences through public exchanges. I would not have been able to do this by starting with and relying solely on the resources available through the means of traditional academic discourse.

In an online interview, available on Live Art Development Agency's (LADA) website, scholars Jen Harvie and Dominic Johnson advocate for more of the unusual type of publishing that recognises the process of making and doing, as outlined above in Athey's and my experiences and favoured by LADA in collaboration with the publisher Intellect²¹. Harvie and Johnson describe these publications as 'visually rich, multi-textual academic writing, but also creative writing or conventional academic writing plus creative writing' (2014). They would like the publishers and academia to be more responsive to artists, their archives and ways the artists themselves would wish their work to be presented, in the contexts that make sense to them. They are also interested in 'institutions like the Higher Education Funding Council of England and the REF and its exercises to recognise the rigour, originality and significance of those kinds of publications' (2014).

Regarding my practical work and the themes it explores, it is perhaps appropriate that this bridging of the gap between practical and theoretical metaphorically corresponds to the liminality inherent to displacement and imbalance rooted in migratory existence. Conducting research positioned somewhere between artistic praxis and academia can often induce similar feelings of being out of place to living in-between two countries, homes or identities. Nelson refers to the PaR process as full of hardship. The evidence for this relationship often being out of tune is regularly found in conference environments or external evaluations on PaR modules at colleges. In such contexts it is not unusual to hear artists describing academic research as dry,

slow, indirect or bearing no relevance to artistic practice itself, and from academics that artists' research can be random, insubstantial, not scholarly enough. This is not a new phenomenon. In *The Return of the Real*, looking back to the visual arts in the 1970s, Hal Foster notices that:

If the artists hoped to be elevated by theory, the theorists looked to be grounded in art; but often these two projections advanced two misconceptions: that art is not theoretical, not productive of critical concepts, in its own right; and that theory is only supplemental, to be applied or not as one sees fit. (Foster 1999: xvi)

At the Warwick IFTR-FIRT conference I mentioned earlier, numerous attendees commended the fact that the artists' roundtable was scheduled as a regular panel session to allow conversation between practitioners and scholars about the processes they use to create their work and investigate any challenges around presenting work in the conference setting. Both Chairs, Yvon Bonenfant (scholar and extended voice practitioner) and Yana Meerzon (theoretician), were praised for fostering a productive conversation around this increasingly more relevant subject. The conversation recognised recent contributions to the field, but also highlighted how much more work needs to be conducted to nurture a better understanding of what PaR may entail, how it can be better facilitated and how much space there is for both sides (practitioners and scholars) to reach out further, listen and respond to each other's research and ways of working and to keep trying to find constructive and useful mutual and inclusive language, thinking and research methodologies.

In *Encounter One* I suggested that the space of instability and in-between-ness could provide a potent place for new resolutions and freedoms that may contribute to the pleasure and creativity of exile and counteract its pain. *Internal Terrains*, which I

shall analyse in more detail in the continuation of this chapter, is an artistic attempt to bridge the dichotomy between the pain and pleasure of exile, originating from the space between praxis and theory. In doing this I will attempt to establish flexible and symbiotic relationship between research questions, making and analysis, and to use PaR as a methodological framework and conceptual enquiry to be negotiated rather than as a formula. My intention for *Internal Terrains* as a PaR project is to generate knowledge around exilic displacement and provide artistic and methodological insights that can be taken forward in artistic and scholarly research as a fluid, constructive, creative and collaborative relationship between practice and theory. Trinh T. Minh-Ha, the Vietnamese film director and scholar based in the USA, summarises this relationship using ‘an old statement by Marx: that theory cannot thrive without being rooted in practice, and that practice cannot liberate itself without theory’ (Minh-Ha 1992: 122). For her, the most sterile part of theory is when it prescribes ways of reading and speaking about practice. ‘It is necessary for me always to keep in mind that one cannot really theorise about film, but only *with* film’ she claims (122).

Cartographies of memory

The performance I will be reflecting on here, the PaR project *Internal Terrains*, is the focus of the second part of the *Encounter Two* and the practical part of the thesis submission as a whole, dealing with issues of loss, crossing borders, personal memory, home, belonging and migration. The performance was witnessed live at the University of Warwick and is available on the DVD as part of this thesis. The performance is an

intermedial experiment in using practice and theory collaboratively to build on the previous trilogy of works *Rupture*, *Asphyxia* and *Suspended*, as discussed in the previous chapter. This practical research will aim to contribute further to the discourse on how migratory identity is formed across place and time through the embodied experiences of trauma, memory of loss, crossing borders and the rebuilding of the self in the present. It will also aim to illuminate further some of the ways of generating this discourse through performing and writing about the performance. How can the sharing of personal autobiographical performance material contribute to a better understanding of exilic identity and a reconstruction of the self? What is the political value of personal material and personal memories? What meanings of 'home' evolve in the process of continuous migration and borders crossing, with dozens of changed addresses over several decades? What form of performance and what performance tools can lend themselves to reconciling the fragmentary and transient nature of the exilic experience? These were the questions I was interested in at the start of the enquiry and the practical making of a new piece of work. I was equally interested in the performative ways, approaches, attempts, techniques and methodologies to deal with these questions through devising and performing.

In *Encounter One* the trilogy considered ways of using the artist's body to explore and discuss, through making and performing, the trauma of migration and the relationship between the pain and the creativity of exile. Through the process of reflecting on the trilogy I concluded that I had utilised repetitive returns to the autobiographical material in the past to construct performative fragments and episodes, which I then shaped by using text, film, photography, movement, installation and sound. I also retrospectively identified the placing of the body out of balance and

stretching the physical boundaries of the body as two additional strategies employed in making work that proved useful. Taking this into account, *Internal Terrains* as practical research will pay particular attention to repeating and returning, unbalancing and creating fragmented associations in order to better understand how these methodologies work in creating the performance and generating new discourse through PaR. How useful can they be as principles guiding the creative process and the making of the new performance? They were the sole principles and absolutely crucial for the making of the trilogy, so will they be sufficient for the making of *Internal Terrains* too? In the critical analysis of the trilogy in *Encounter One* I focused on the body of the performer. Now I wish to extend the scope of the research towards including the use of objects, as mnemonic, evocative devices, at the start of the enquiry and to look at how they may aid, direct and contribute to the creation of new material through the use of repetition, return, unbalancing and through the fragmented, associative organisation of the work. In other words, these categories will be used here as potential research strategies applying to objects as much as to the performer's body and indeed to any other medium, layer or material source used here, such as film, text, gestures, sound and song. The significance of objects in my work is not a new element as part of my wider research – I focused momentarily in *Encounter One* on the importance of installations in my performances. I talked briefly about their role in creating specific imaginaries for me to embody in the performance and about their visual significance both in the context of the performance and in isolation i.e. as gallery exhibits afterwards. When extracting installations from live work to exhibit in galleries I use another layer of repetition. Through this process I am interested in the physical defragmentation of the performance material and its metamorphosis into something

new, which resembles the process of bodily integration into a new environment, when displacement gradually gives life to a new form of existence. In the following analysis the objects will provide an entry into the research and discussion around the formation of exilic migratory identity through the themes outlined earlier: trauma, memory, loss, home and crossing borders.

In terms of the structure of this chapter from this point onwards, I will attempt to mirror the fragmented composition of the performance itself with fragmentary analytic reflections on it, based on the distinct objects (or groups of objects) and performance episodes from *Internal Terrains*, in doing so I draw on Jane Rendell's methodology of site-writing. In her book *Site-Writing: The architecture of art criticism* (2010), Jane Rendell juxtaposes and interweaves art works with personal memories, dreams, places and cultural and political issues around curating the selected works. The innovative and varied structure that she uses has been devised in response to how she perceives the art is created, programmed, experienced by the viewer and documented. I found this structure of communication with the reader extremely efficient in addressing various ways of how we perceive the work: intellectually, emotionally, visually and verbally. Using a fragmentary approach and with different styles of writing interweaving she almost creates three-dimensional models of the works she analyses for her readers and this is something that I will, on a more modest scale, attempt to achieve here. For Rendell the spaces we occupy – both physically and psychically, in regards to our personal and collective thoughts and memories – are key to the deep understanding of our own identity, the art that deals with it and the critiquing of the specific works of art falling into this category. Thinking in this way has allowed her to combine practical and conceptual ideas around identity and to

capitalise on her cross-disciplinary research involving history, art criticism, feminist theory, autobiography and psychoanalysis.

Building on Rendell's interdisciplinary, fragmentary approach, to reflect on the process of the making of *Internal Terrains* regarding the distinct groups of objects, I will use each time:

- An excerpt of the performance text that has developed in relationship to the objects analysed in that section.
- A brief description of the object or a group of objects.
- An image or a selection of images.
- A set of instructions to myself as the maker and performer.
- A reflection on how the selected objects work organically within the performance, what questions they raise and deal with, and what discourse they generate.

In this way I aim to tease out different registers regarding the analysis and the perception of the work. I believe this way of writing is more compatible with the practical experiments conducted in the studio and in the theatre space, emulating more closely what I do in practice. I am hoping for this way of writing to provide more clarity in the process of looking and understanding what methodologies are relevant for the making of this new piece of work. To what extent does the exploration of objects as mnemonic devices in grappling with issues of exile modify my existing PaR strategies used in the trilogy? What does the negotiation of these familiar strategies reveal in terms of new methodologies and new reflections on exile, and how are they formulated as a result of performing *Internal Terrains*? In addition, this repetitive

structure and model of writing, will utilise the very methodologies I am applying to the making of the performance, as I move from one group of objects to another, through my returns to the past events and traumas as well as to the performance itself. I believe this writing process will allow me to be open to new insights emerging from the reflective text as much as I have been open to the discoveries evolving from the process of making new work and performing it in front of an audience. Through these two parallel processes of making/performing and writing about making/performing, I will explore how they complement and contradict each other, and contemplate their similarities and differences. I am uncertain and curious at the same time about how these fragmented excerpts, repetitive in their rhythm and nature, will affect the reader and whether the person who reads will experience them as soothing or unbalancing. In either case I appeal to the reader to immerse themselves in these conditions, as these very states resemble closely the performer's feelings in this piece as well as the very character of the repetitive returns to the past, which can be meditatively soothing and dangerous at the same time. Dangerous because when returning to the traumatic past it is difficult to predict what one will find there, how disturbing the very process of getting there will be, how complicated the making of the work about it will be and how dislocating the writing and analysing afterwards may prove to be. There is so much inherent risk in each repetitive layer of this process that a plausible question may be why one would even want to return to these traumatic memories and experiences from the past. The need to return may of course be compulsive, but when this is not the case it mainly has to do with the desire to understand and resolve, which is not very different from how a detective would assemble pieces of a puzzling crime in order to resolve the case, so that the victim of the crime can put the story to rest and move on.

Part of the process of incrementally returning to the traumatic past, every time learning and understanding and being able to cope a little more, is the desire to move on in stages and share the emerging knowledge with the audience. As such, returning becomes part of the wider process of looking back in order to move forward. Zarina Bhimji claims that '[y]ou can never return to what you didn't have but [she] need[s] to make sense of those moments' (Demos et al 2012: 25). It is difficult to find out where one belongs if the places, histories and countries the person returns to are not easy to access or no longer even exist, but this does not mean that the need to return disappears. Bhimji is a visual artist known for her evocative and poetic films of empty buildings in Uganda, the country that she and her family were exiled from by General Idi Amin in 1974 when she was eleven years old. These traumatic political events have fundamentally influenced her life and art and her interest in the concept of what is missing, what is not there. T.J. Demos quotes her, saying: 'It is important for me to take charge of my childhood myself, in order to control my adulthood. I need to make light of my childhood experience, to release the pain' (25).

As a way of introducing the reader very briefly to *Internal Terrains*, before I get into a more detailed look at the performance through the patterns outlined above, it may be useful to mention here that, in regards to approaching the work through objects, the whole performance set can be perceived as an object/installation further inhabited by objects and installations within. To set up the basis for the practical research through the use of objects and to open a conversation around what home may mean in the transient migratory experience, I used the opening installation consisting of twenty cables with bulbs placed in a circle to mark the boundaries of an imaginary home and locate me in the performance space. If the space in this case is

metaphorically used to practise and discuss issues around identity in the context of the trauma of displacement, then it may be useful to highlight that elements such as objects, installations, images, gestures, films, sounds and texts occupying the space also position me in time. Each episode evolves in a distinctly different part of the set/home, inscribed by a specific object and a selection of media, pointing towards a different, even if not strictly specified moment in time or in history, non-chronologically related to each other and to previous homes preceding this imaginary home created in the present, on stage. Therefore each episode in the performance, as a manifestation of the categories such as mapping and locating, can be perceived as a room in a home existing across both space and time. I return to these rooms, revisit them, unbalance and dislocate myself in the process of reaching for the moment and the place in which the trauma of displacement was triggered. The episodic writing to follow will be opening and closing doors to rooms in an imaginary home in the way *Internal Terrains* does on stage with imaginary rooms and compartments – for and with the audience. In doing so I will draw on my reading of Rendell's site-writing, on the fragmentary structure of *Internal Terrains*, on the episodic nature of recalling personal memories from the past (in bursts, in visual memory bites), on the mnemonic characteristic of objects and on the transient nature of migratory movement. The story, if there is one, evolves through the interactions with objects and is told through moments in time and through memories of places – all stored under the most sensitive layers of our skins.

Section one: a circle of bulbs

I don't know how I managed, but I did – with a suitcase too, which I could sit on. Next to an old skinny man in a vest, chain smoking and offering rakia from a dirty bottle. After a while I started saying yes. The year was 1992 – I was 26 years old. At occasional dark stations people were pulled off the train. Guns were shot, up in the air, I think, for more people to get on. I don't know what happened to those thrown out. I can almost see them walking through dry summer night Serbian land.

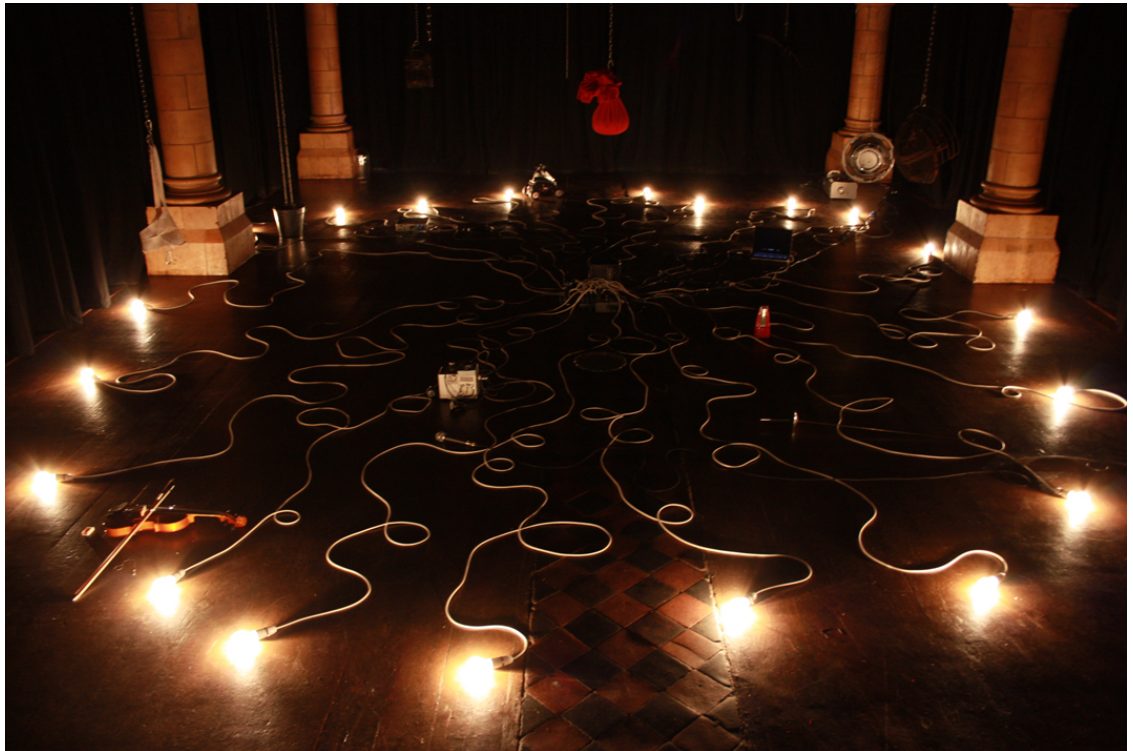


Figure 9: Lighting installation at the Colchester Arts Centre, image by Josh Waddington.

A LIGHTING INSTALLATION, PLACED ON THE FLOOR, CONSISTING OF NUMEROUS ELECTRIC CABLES WITH A BULB AT THE END OF EACH, SPREADING OUT FROM A CENTRAL DIMMER THAT I, THE PERFORMER, AM IN CHARGE OF. I CONTROL HOW MUCH LIGHT WILL ACCOMPANY EACH EPISODE IN THE PERFORMANCE. THE DESIGN IS AT THE SAME TIME DELIBERATELY INVITING (SEDUCTIVE, SOFT, BEAUTIFUL) AND THREATENING (THERE IS A CERTAIN DISCOMFORT INVOLVED IN THE IDEA OF INHABITING THE SPACE LADEN WITH ELECTRIC CABLES AND CURRENTS).

Instructions to myself as the performer and maker:

- 1) Create an imaginary home as a contrast to transient existence, in which I can reside temporarily and from which I can return to and revisit other previous, lost temporary homes on my migratory journeys.
- 2) Place my body in a constant state of imbalance.
- 3) Devise a pattern to control the level of lighting from the central dimmer in order to reveal and conceal parts of the stage according to the needs of specific performance episodes evolving later.
- 4) Illuminate and transition gently, make the invisible visible, create a space to hold associations, fragments, dreamlike slippery snippets.

Reflections:

If we permit that even a temporary occupation of a new space in exile constructs a certain kind of home – how can that home be described and what does it mean to feel continuously out of balance within it? How can one overcome that feeling and what can an exilic person do with that embodied state? The reason why one feels

continuously out of balance in exile is due to the condition of being uprooted, not having stability in life and lacking basic nets of safety and protection, such as the automatic right to work and study, access to health and benefits, the support of family, permanent address, bank account, citizenship, personal documents and so forth. The feelings of being unhinged, unbalanced, out of breath and disoriented, as I have claimed and used my body to convey in previous chapters, are constants in migrants' lives and a direct consequence of the ground shaking under their feet. To attempt to answer, first, what it may feel like to be continuously out of balance and, second, to generate the body movement and the performance material out of working in this kind of set-up – physically, psychologically and metaphorically – for *Internal Terrains* I create an electric installation with bulbs. This becomes a performance set that I inhabit, my temporary home. The set, devised at the beginning of the research, is thus reflecting on the condition of living in constant danger and under pressure, it is shaping the episodes in the performance, and at the same time providing its only lighting, as opposed to using the theatre lighting suspended from the rig. The sense of imbalance and unhomeliness is immediately achieved by the fact that there is a lingering feeling the set may not be entirely safe. Every step I take on stage happens on electric cables, which are precarious to navigate and easy to stumble over. In addition, the objects are suspended from above so I need to be careful of them too. This set-up and the devising of the rest of the material within it should ensure that the feeling of imbalance is embodied and maintained throughout the performance. The intention behind putting the body in a continuous fragile and precarious state through the use of objects is in order to aid the bodily ability to reach for the sensitive layers 'under the skin', the memories of the most precarious personal moments from the past.

Visually, the inspiration for the lighting installation came from Mona Hatoum's piece *Undercurrent* (2008) consisting of red cords with bulbs, mixed in a red square of textile-like material in the centre of it, so that the bulbs appear to be spreading out of the warm-looking red-woven rug. The installation was designed for Max Hetzler Temporary in Berlin, the gallery that used natural daytime lighting. In *Internal Terrains*' installation there are no soft looking textiles. The aesthetic is industrial, it is used in pitch black rooms and the cables themselves are not meant to be static – I move them and interact with them at several points in the performance, exposing my body even closer to the electric currents and the heat emitted from the bulbs. Mona Hatoum has also used the heat in her work to induce a sense of danger in the viewer, for example in her installation *The Light at the End* (1989). In this work the framed grid, positioned in the corner of an underground looking space, releases so much heat that the viewer does not dare get anywhere near it. The heat from the bulbs in *Internal Terrains* also creates an olfactory sensation. In each performance space there will be at least a vague smell of burning radiating from the bulbs, from the dust and particles between the bulbs and various textures of the floors or the wooden beds, in which I place the bulbs when the floor is too sensitive to receive them directly. Regarding the visual experience, audience members have commented on the image of the electric cables and bulbs on stage in different ways – some see them as city lights, for others they resemble routes on a map. If they were stretched into one long line, they could be seen as a string of lights connecting compartments in old-fashioned trains from the forties, progressing slowly through the countryside at night. Arranged into a circle they suddenly contain the movement into an image of something stationary, like a home. For me the cables also relate to the body, I experience them as veins visibly outlined

under the thin layer of outer skin, filled with blood, pulsating with life. I use the bulbs to illuminate the stage softly most of the time – in that sense they vaguely reprise the softness of the locks of my hair at the end of each string, which I used in *Suspended*. The dimmer, however, can make it possible to use the light much more strongly and then it creates a stark, piercing sensation, similar to the lights in prisons or operating rooms, or lights pointed into a detainee's eyes during an interrogation. In my work I draw on Mona Hatoum's strategies to visually stage uncanny images, which are at once seductive and unsettling. They are familiar and homely, but also strange and difficult to explain – they seem to dislocate the viewer and bring feelings of discomfort to the fore. Rendell notices, drawing on Freud, that 'the uncanny is not a precise concept, but rather encompasses a wide range of feelings from slight uneasiness through to dread and outright fear' (Rendell 2010: 186). Hatoum's kitchen utensils for example, such as ordinary cheese graters, may be enlarged to scary proportions, or, if used in their realistic dimensions, electricity may run through them. A wheelchair will have knives instead of handles placed where a person pushing it would need to hold on to. A doormat will consist of nails rather than soft fabric, with an imprint of the word 'welcome' on them.

To have the stage lit by light bulbs placed on the floor in *Internal Terrains*, rather than by theatre lights pointing at me from above in the theatre rig, is itself an uncanny experience for me as the performer. With theatre lighting, the performer on stage cannot usually see the audience. The stage is like a version of a vacuum, filled with darkness and muffled, distorted sounds, because everything in theatre is geared towards the perfect reception of image and sound from an audience's point of view. In *Internal Terrains* the audience see me, but I can also see them. This allows me to read

intimately the silent exchanges and communication that evolve between them and the objects, sounds, and my actions, and this can affect my own performance in turn. My reading of their reactions also influences the level of the lighting I control from the stage via the dimmer to respond to the atmosphere in the room and, as I have noticed, it can affect my delivery of the song towards the end of the performance. The song is very personal – I sing it *a capella* – and the more emotionally the audience react to the performance material until that moment, the more of my own emotions pour into the singing.

Placing the lights on the floor, at least at the beginning of the performance, before I start interacting with them, also affects how the audience perceive the objects in the space, especially those hanging from above. The suspended objects, specifically those further away from the audience, appear almost invisible at first. This means that the effect of revealing them through the interaction between each object and my body is stronger when their turn in the performance comes, when the episode to which they are central commences, when I metaphorically enter that specific room in the home. Until that point the objects reside in their own shadows, as does the past, until I reach for it by performing one of my repetitive returns. The past, of course, as much as the shadows themselves, is never completely reachable, but for the fragments hidden in our memories.

This is not the first time for me to use the light emitted by bulbs in my work. I used them in *Asphyxia* in direct relationship with evoking sounds and memories from the past at the very beginning of the performance. I also used bulbs in the installation *Izazov* in the performance *Suspended*. Other artists have used them too, often in regards to memory, identity or loss. French artist Christian Boltanski has used bulbs

extensively, often hanging them in his installation pieces in front of photographs of ordinary people, giving them the significance of a memorial²². Felix Gonzales Torres, a Cuban artist who migrated to the USA, has used them to comment on the nature of ownership, such as in *Untitled/America* (1994-95). In *Internal Terrains* the naked bulbs demarcate a migratory home, a place with a disturbed sense of balance and safety, the place where control over life and events is difficult to achieve, a place laden with embodied memories of ruptures and losses. Having a home is central to feeling secure and safe in life. Emma Cox notices that ‘a lot of theatre of migration coalesces around notions of *home*. As soon as one becomes a migrant home becomes a problem’ (Cox 2014: 77). Charles Moore claims in his foreword to Junichirō Tanizaki’s *In Praise of Shadows* that ‘[o]ne of the basic human requirements is the need to dwell, and one of the central human acts is the act of inhabiting, of connecting ourselves, however temporarily, with a place on the planet which belongs to us and to which we belong’ (Tanizaki 2001: i). Migrants, who indeed often occupy these spaces only temporarily while in limbo, while waiting for their Kafkaesque legal situations to be resolved, are forced to learn, for the sake of their own physical, psychological and spiritual survival, to live and dwell in their transitory homes even if ‘the ground is shifting under [their] feet’, as Mona Hatoum is aware of (Archer et al 1997: 134). If the ground under one’s feet does not feel stable to walk on – as the circle of bulbs and electricity cables attempt to convey in *Internal Terrains* – the only way to survive may be in learning to live in suspension, to live with that continuous sense of being out of balance. Janine Antoni comments on this lucidly when talking about her performance installation and film *Touch* (2002), for which she needed to learn to walk on wire:

And as I was walking I started to notice that it wasn’t that I was getting more balanced, but that I was getting more comfortable with

being out of balance. I would let the pendulum swing a little bit further and rather than getting nervous and overcompensating by leaning too much to one side I could compensate just enough. And I thought, I wish I could do that in my life when things are getting out of balance.’ (art:21)

Through the experience of laying out the opening installation of *Internal Terrains* in rehearsal rooms, arranging it and discussing it with my artistic collaborators, and later on through these written reflections, as well as through looking at the documentation, I became acutely aware how much the set envelops and holds the whole performance and defines it in terms of space, much more than was ever the case with the sets in the trilogy of works preceding *Internal Terrains*. The space in the trilogy seemed to be much more defined by my body and the gestures and rituals I performed. Entering the process of creation via objects and thoughts about what home may mean within a transient migratory experience, rather than via my body and the movement of the body in space, made me much more aware, very early in the process, of the architecture of the very space I was creating for myself. Physically, the space I am treading on throughout the performance, and the way my body has to navigate that space, are hugely informed by how it has been mapped, drawn, marked and designed by the cables, bulbs, hanging objects and the objects placed on the floor. Metaphorically the architectural design of the performance space also evolves in regards to the memories of all the previous spaces my displaced body has occupied in the past. I realised that, from that point onwards (the point of the construction of the lighting bulbs defining the space), for the sake of reaching past memories and discussing the trauma relating to displacement in *Internal Terrains*, I would need to think in terms of space and the very *architecture* of memory. This fact has, in turn, made me understand that the instinctive attraction to and the relationship between

Jane Rendell's thoughts and the layout of her book, which I was reading in parallel with making the performance, were less random and more functional than I may have initially thought. I became aware not only that I would need to think spatially about repetitive returns to traumatic memories and to what being imbalanced in space may mean, but that I would need to think about how writing about the performance can be laid out on pages to reflect the spatial quality of the fragmented cartographies of the body and memory traced in *Internal Terrains*.

Section two: timing and positioning the body in space with and against the objects

– mask, remote-control car, stuffed bird, electric shock machine

Mum... mum? Can you hear me mum? Mum... Would you recommend it, mum?



Figure 10: Interacting with the electric shock machine, at the Playhouse Derry. Still by Chris McAlinden.



Figure 11: Remote-control operated car 'driven' by the stuffed crow, at the Colchester Arts Centre. Still by Bob Karper.



Figure 12: Ducking under the mask, at the Project Arts Centre, Dublin. Still by Craig Cox.

FENCING MASK FROM THE 1920s SUSPENDED ON A CHAIN – WHEN I SWING IT INTO MOVEMENT IT ALMOST TOUCHES THE AUDIENCE IN THE FRONT ROW. ELECTRIC SHOCK MACHINE WITH A METER LOOKING IDENTICAL TO A TELEPHONE RING-DIAL. STUFFED BIRD, WITH ITS WINGS SPREAD OUT, TAKING THE DRIVER SEAT OF THE REMOTE-CONTROL OPERATED CAR. NIKOLA TESLA LEAVING EUROPE TO SETTLE IN THE USA. R.B. KITAJ LEAVING THE USA TO SETTLE IN EUROPE.

Instructions to myself as the performer and maker:

- 1) Keep electric currents in mind and work on the ways they could connect spaces and events.
- 2) Observe what happens to the body negotiating the cables and objects within the circle of bulbs.
- 3) Experiment with repetitive gestures in interaction with objects and observe if they generate any associative material.

Reflections:

Following from the thoughts on the lighting installation consisting of cables, bulbs and a dimmer, I wanted to take a brief look at the ways the electricity further permeates the performance as a metaphorical connector between the past and present, illuminating aspects of exilic lives as lives in suspension and out of balance. My attraction to electricity as material lies in its uncanny qualities; objects connected to electricity can appear very beautiful and very dangerous at the same time. When the possibility of lighting streets and houses with electric lamps first became a realistic possibility in 1879, as a result of experiments by American inventor Thomas Edison, this meant excitement, scientific enlightenment, civilisation and progress. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which was first published in 1818, the monster is brought to life by using electricity. In James Wales' 1931 film based on it Frankenstein exclaims 'Life!' as he awakens his creature by using a Tesla coil – high-frequency alternating currents. Electrical currents indeed can revive the body after a heart attack, but can also destroy the body on an electric chair or hurt a human body or an animal trying to jump or cross an electric fence defending property from uninvited guests. Symbolically, when we feel most alive, motivated, in love, filled with desire – we say that we feel *electric*. We say the same when we enter a room filled with a vibrant mix of energies and feelings. In *Internal Terrains* I capitalise on these contrasting and ambiguous ways electricity can be perceived and use it to light the stage literally, as well as to throw light on the shadows of the spaces in the past metaphorically. I use objects and stories associated with electricity, sometimes directly and other times only tangentially, to reflect on the desire to live, to love, to take control and to forget – desires which are

also closely related to living in exile. For example, I use the electric shock machine in *Internal Terrains* to draw on Sebald's character uncle Adelwarth, also mentioned in the previous chapter, who chose electric shock therapy to help him forget, so that he does not need to live with traumatic memories anymore. I use the meter on the electric shock machine, normally used to gauge the level of electricity in a treatment, to dial the number of my childhood home and ask my mother, who herself had received electric shocks in the past, whether she would recommend forgetting.

I wanted to use electricity in *Internal Terrains* as something that underlines the feeling of displacement in the trajectory between exilic migratory homes. Throughout the whole performance my body continuously needs to be aware of my balance when navigating around and across the electric cables in the space. In addition, I place myself further out of balance in relationship to the objects to accentuate the feeling of being de-centred, ungrounded and unstable due to migration as a state that I physically occupy. I deliver a text while swinging a heavy, rusty and old fencing mask, during which I need to be aware of the cables beneath me, the mask swinging towards my head, the text I am reciting and the soundtrack I need to time myself against in order to be heard. The delivery of this challenging choreography evokes the difficulty of living in exile. I briefly invoke Nikola Tesla, the inventor who worked on the science of electricity alongside Edison, and I let the audience know that, even though he conducted all the scientific work the world knows him for in the USA, he was a migrant – a Serbian man born in Croatia. In this way Tesla is linked to the *Internal Terrains* landscape not only through electricity, which feeds the bulbs from one single plug via the dimmer into the twenty bulbs on the floor, but also through his connection to both Serbia and Croatia, the lands of my own origin. Historical records

tell us that Tesla never properly formed a home in the USA. He spent most of his life living in various New York hotels and eventually died in a hotel room in poverty. In the performance I mention the myth surrounding him that suggests he decided to get himself castrated, to cut off the currents of sexual desire running through his own body, in order to be able to concentrate on inventing and controlling electricity outside of his body.

I juxtapose Tesla with the painter R.B. Kitaj, another migrant looking for home far away from where he was born, by recalling a memory of meeting him in his Hollywood home a few years before he committed suicide. On that occasion Kitaj told me that he had no desire to belong to any place or any person any more, and therefore, for the first time in his life, was feeling completely free. I remember how this again reminded me of Sebald's character I mentioned earlier and how surprising I found it at the time, especially considering the passion which was still noticeably prevalent in Kitaj's paintings. His unfinished *Los Angeles* series of paintings had recently been at the National Gallery in London and was filled with colours and memories of his deceased wife, and love for the city to which he returned after his wife died in England, namely *Los Angeles*. Kitaj, as it has been well documented, was no stranger to migration and travelling. His father was Hungarian and his mother had a Russian-Jewish background. When his father abandoned them, his mother remarried a refugee from Vienna. Kitaj travelled the world working on a boat and served the US Army in France and Germany. He studied in New York and England, where he remained for a number of years, developing work as part of the circle that involved David Hockney and, later, Francis Bacon, Lucien Freud, Leon Kossoff and Frank Auerbach (the so-

called School of London). Was life on the move, in constant transit, an attempt to free himself from the desire to belong to a specific place?

Interacting with the mask, as if I were pushing it around to provoke it and get some answers from it, I evoke the myth surrounding Tesla's mysterious dedication to science and Kitaj's embracing the freedom from the desire to belong in order to question the relationship between not having a home as a physical space to occupy (be it a house in its smallest iteration or a country in its largest) and the cartography of memories one embodies as a result of one's migratory journeys. I use discrete repetitive gestures throughout, the gestures that defy precise and predictable rehearsed choreography, such as prodding the fencing mask with the foil, walking alongside it while it swings, having to duck underneath it. Later on I re-dial the meter on the electric shock machine, which can get easily and unpredictably detached from the body of the machine. I attempt to operate the movement of the stuffed crow on an electric remote-controlled car and regularly fail, as the progress of the car is always sabotaged by the electric cables laid out on the floor. In the process of all these repetitive gestures I unbalance myself over and over again. During the research process this frustrates me, makes me feel vulnerable and raw, my body struggles and feels clumsy and challenged, my concentration and self-control and the control over objects weaken. This combination of repeating and unbalancing, and the fragility and sense of tiredness generated out of it, contribute to the doors of the rooms within the space of *Internal Terrains*, populated with memories from the past, opening with a bit less resistance, as when tears come out more easily when we are feeling too tired or a bit ill. During the performance, my body is reminded of these experiences from the research and devising process. The renewed live and unrehearsed effort that goes into repeating,

unbalancing, controlling and giving up control on stage generates the states, which again help the doors that I may not necessarily wish to open do so with a bit less resistance. The struggle the body goes through may not be immediately apparent as in, for example, the more obviously strenuous durational work that performance artists employ, or indeed some of the more obvious physical effort my own body went through in some episodes in the trilogy, but the nature of the efforts and physical negotiations the body performs in the space of *Internal Terrains* is cumulative and effective nevertheless.

Section three: two films and a cage in suspension

This is me here, now. This is me there thirty years later. This is me there forty years earlier. This is me there twenty years later. This is me there thirty years ago. There, twenty-five years ago. There, ten years ago. This is me there thirty years ago. This is me there ten years later. This is me there forty years ago. This is me there forty-six years ago. This is me there twenty years later. There, thirty years later. This is me there twenty-five years later.



Figure 13: Twirling under a cage, at the Project Arts Centre, Dublin. Still by Craig Cox.



Figure 14: Still from *This is Me Here* film by Natasha Davis.

SMALL METAL BIRDCAGE SUSPENDED FROM THE RIG. WITHIN IT NO BIRDS. INSTEAD:
A MINI PROJECTOR THAT, ONCE I STEP IN AND PLACE MY ARMS, ONE BY ONE, IN
FRONT OF IT, REVEAL A FILM, PROJECTING. I CATCH AND HOLD THE IMAGES WITH MY
HANDS AND ALLOW THEM, BY MOVING MY OWN BODY, TO TRAVEL ACROSS THE SKIN
OF MY ARMS AND SHOULDERS, MY FACE AND MY BACK. THEN I START TWIRLING.
TINY PHOTOGRAPHS, ON NECKLACES HANGING IN TREES, FEATURED IN THE TINY
FILM, MAKE WAY FOR A LONGER, LARGER FILM *THIS IS ME HERE*, WHICH WILL BE
PROJECTED A LITTLE LATER ON THE WALL OF THE SPACE, TRACING APPROXIMATELY
FORTY HOMES I OCCUPIED IN THE FOUR DECADES OF MY MIGRATORY JOURNEYS.

Instructions to myself as the performer and maker:

- 1) Write a factual backdrop to the personal material, however brief it may be. It can, for example, be a list of addresses where I lived, recited on a microphone.
- 2) Walk on the cables laid out in the performance space in normal speed for five minutes and generate a repetitive gesture out of it, related or unrelated to an object or objects in space.

Reflections:

Internal Terrains, as a continuation of my previous work, is about lost homes, spaces and times due to traumatic events such as civil wars, forced exiles, stateless conditions and similar. It occurred to me during the making of *Internal Terrains*, as I was focusing on the concept of home, that abandoned homes – as holders of distant memories – may appear vague as a concept to an audience member who may not have needed to move many times during their life. The very idea of living in-between spaces, borders, countries and homes rarely actually includes facts – how many of such

homes were there? I thought that just listing my previous addresses with names of towns and districts in a range of countries could provide a more precise feeling of what life in constant transit may be like, as it would be an arduous task even to listen to such a long list. I calculated that there were more than forty addresses I occupied in the four decades of my life. This information, the list of addresses put together, created an interesting rhythmic but rather monotonous effect, while emotionally it did not produce a much stronger result than just reading aloud random addresses from the telephone directory. I was looking for a factual backdrop, however I did not want this content to be devoid of emotion. In the end I shaped this information into a short film, in which the camera rolls over photographs of buildings, flats, houses, places where I felt at home or, from early twenties onwards – spent days and nights trying to rest, waiting, in-between places, in limbo. Some of them are empty in the photographs and some others include myself or other people. The film is short, open-ended, informational and it uses my own voice simply reciting addresses, with a few occasional brief comments about them in English or two other languages: Serbo-Croatian and Greek. It focuses on the space, on the architecture of the places and the movement between them and, importantly, does not resolve or conclude anything. It is a form of brief visual and factual resume of locations occupied on my exilic and migratory journeys. Some of the places in the photographs do not exist any more. They are, or may have been, bombed, destroyed, abandoned or overgrown (such as the place identified as Isminis 12a in Piraeus, Greece where I returned in 2012). The sense of emptiness around these places, houses and buildings left to history, which hold the traces of people who once lived there, as well as the unasked questions about their future destinies after they had left, is also the feeling that very much permeates the

photographs and meditative films by Zarina Bhimji, the artist I referred to earlier in this chapter. In contrast to her emotive and meditative camera use, which leaves the locating of the buildings and monuments only to the image, I do provide co-ordinates by reciting addresses in a repetitive rhythm. I was concerned that my voice and the list of addresses would void the material of emotion. Experimenting with it led me, however, to believe that both approaches (silent and voiced) preserve the emotional value of the material, although my film perhaps achieves that by combining the images and facts with the silences, which Lucy Cash describes as ‘the absence of voice [that] seems to fill the frame’ (Davis et al 2013: 60). Perhaps the silences and the camera lingering between the two photographs highlight the condition of existing in limbo and in-between places more than the facts and addresses themselves do. Anusha Ravishankar, in her unpublished master thesis, in which she writes about *Internal Terrains*, finds these silent pauses most potent. She notices accurately:

These silent pauses stand for the time that lapses between two places, when nothing happens, there is no movement and everything stands still. Like the six years that Davis spent in Greece, alone, unable to leave the country, nor live in the country as a legitimate citizen. Or the time spent on the train between Serbia and Greece where the end of the journey was not in sight, and it was uncertain that they would arrive safely. Similarly, in the decades that have gone by from Davis’ childhood to her now fixed home in London there are several years of limbo. The haunting silences in the video are a representation of those times and spaces. (Ravishankar 2014: 92-93)

The silences in the spaces when the camera lingers between the photographs of two homes on migratory journeys are the places where the architectures of space converge with the architectures of memory, where emotions mix with the memories that are stored under, what I previously referred to in this text, the most sensitive layers of our skins. The camera’s seeming inability to decide whether to stay with the

previous address or move to the next one is playful, unbalancing and wishful of being able to make a choice. The truth, however, is the opposite: the camera lingers in-between, in limbo, because there is no choice and because in those situations it was neither possible to return, nor was it easy to move forward from that arrested moment in place and time. Lucy Cash describes this feeling that the camera creates as a 'dizzying vertigo' and claims that due to it she is 'unable to locate a coherent time frame to hang on to' (Davis et al 2013: 60).

The shorter film, emitted out of the cage, suspended in the space and projecting on the skin of my body in movement, is even more destabilising. Due to the complicated projecting surface, the images become abstract and difficult to read. They become clearer when I move out of the projecting shot, and, instead of my skin, they project onto the wall of the space. Then the audience may be able to discern small family photographic portraits imprinted onto the jewellery medallions, hanging from tree branches, in a continuous rhythmic movement dictated by the mix of the wind and the way the camera is handled. This is the same film that was projected on my body covered with a black sack as I moved across the space in *Suspended*, thus forming a material link across the time between the trilogy and *Internal Terrains*. The film is accompanied by my rhythmical twirling under the cage, while I am delivering a text about destinies that Serbian women in feudal times, as recorded in Serbian epic heroic poetry, may have found themselves in. The most poignant of these are the stories of women embedded alive into architectural structures such as fortresses and bridges as they were constructed, to ensure the longevity of the buildings. I refer to one of the legends, claiming that, if a woman has a baby and is incorporated into the structure of the building, 'a window can be built around her breast so that the child can drink milk

as long as the mother lives. The legend says one mother lived for almost a year and that milk still flows there'. As much as, in the legend, the biological conversation between the mother and the baby continues via the milk flowing from the imprisoned woman's breast, *Internal Terrains* suggests that the conversation between the home, which one had to flee from in the past, and the dislocated body of the person migrating for years, continues across time and space. However, if this line of conversation were an electric cable, its currents would be inconsistent, or if it were a radio or a telephone cable, its full audio information impeded. If the cable were transmitting images, the flickering information would be obscured rather than revealed, moving in and out of focus and legibility similarly to how the film projected from the cage is translated onto the surface of my skin. The cage itself, as well as the stories of the women built into the buildings, bring associations of prisons, of birds restricted from flying, of the inability to escape, of trains packed with immigrants, of arrested times. The repetitive movement of my body rotating under the cage places the film, the cage and my own body out of balance in a complicated negotiation of the instability between the past and present, and this further points to the difficulty of reaching and resolving the traumas hidden in the shadows of the past.

Section four: the sound of time – metronome, salt, violin, song

I don't mind the experience. Perhaps I even like it. It's just that it... slows you down. It takes a decade. That's all...



Figure 15: Playing the violin, at the Colchester Arts Centre. Still by Bob Karper.



Figure 16: Covering the metronome, at the Project Arts Centre, Dublin. Still by Craig Cox.



Figure 17: Mother text at The Point Centre for Contemporary Art, Nicosia, Cyprus. Image by Maria Tzioni.



Figure 18: Catching salt, at the Project Arts Centre, Dublin. Still by Craig Cox.

RED METRONOME PLACED ON THE FLOOR. RED SACK, CONTAINING SALT, HANGING IN THE SPACE. A CAPELLA SONG HANGING IN THE SPACE. VIOLIN PLACED ON THE FLOOR.

Instructions to myself as the performer and maker:

- 1) Reference time in the context of repeating, unbalancing, fragmenting and the architecture of the performance space.
- 2) Illustrate how civil war affects the life of a family in a personal way. Perhaps create a 'mother' text and a 'father' text.

Reflections:

I have continuously referenced place and space in writing about *Internal Terrains* so far, due to the fact that the architecture of space – in terms of home, travelling, mapping, situating, locating and dislocating – emerged as a significant aspect and a necessary way of thinking in the construction and design of this piece of work, starting with objects. Thinking architecturally, however, as I have indicated earlier, also applies to the concept of time. Throughout the process of *Internal Terrains* I was interested in the question of time and referred to the importance of locating events in time in relation to places in the past – my own, other peoples' and the historical past. This is important as part of the process of cataloguing loss and designing and filling blank spots in the cartography of memory. Therefore, in this encounter with objects in *Internal Terrains*, I would like to reflect on the signifiers of time and their connection to the spaces that memories come from. These signifiers are not clocks, which mark a specific hour, or dates in the calendar. They are simply and only the markers of time passing, of time occupying the unspecified lengths between the past and the present.

Salt may not appear, at first thought, to be a signifier of time passing, although its texture is similar to sand, which is used in hour glasses. In *Internal Terrains* salt seeps from a sack while I am reciting the 'father text'. This text is about my father coming

with me to the station to help me embark on one of the last, if not the very last, trains getting out of former Yugoslavia under the economic and political embargo in 1992, via the last border remaining open, that with Greece. I am trying to reach moments from the past so that I can relate them to the audience. The material is personal and emotional, but I try to deliver it matter-of-factly rather than passionately. I do not want to modify anything, I just want to remember and say how it happened. I want to provide evidence to the audience how an ordinary family can fall apart under the pressure of a civil war. In the studio I put the salt in the sack and tie it so that it is suspended, make a hole at the bottom of it, let the salt stream onto the tray placed on the floor, and try to catch it as it leaks down, having found its own rhythm of movement. I open and close my palm around it, repetitively, and I speak, trying to remember. I am saying it from memory to my devising collaborator Lucy Cash. I focus on the event and anything else, related or unrelated, that can paint the picture of my father to Lucy, what he was like and if what he performed that day was ordinary or unusual under the circumstances. Later on I repeat this in writing. I record the text on paper as I remember speaking it in the studio, and through this layer of repetition I suddenly remember the previous occasion that I verbally drafted this story – I had actually said it once before, to a friend, over a dinner table, years ago how I got out of former Yugoslavia. Perhaps the fact that I had partly narrated a version of it before, even though it was a long time ago, contributed to a certain fluency in the story unfolding to Lucy. Or perhaps it was my physical focus on the repetitive and futile catching of the salt, which always, without an exception, fell through my hands, as difficult to hold on to as the details from the past. Salt has many practical and metaphorical connotations attached to it. It is vital to sustaining life and can also take

life away – the Dead Sea contains so much salt that no living creature can survive in it. It sanitises and corrodes. In *Suspended* I used it to create a protective circle around me prior to performing a series of ritualistic actions. Through these actions I evoked my stateless years in exile and symbolically travelled back in time to speak up for myself. As material, salt is mysterious and straightforward at the same time. In *Internal Terrains*, as it fills the tray underneath it from one performance to the other, it keeps changing the colour and the texture of the tray, as the metal corrodes, itself marked by time passing and its relationship with salt. Anselm Kiefer, a German visual artist, famously uses large quantities of salt on his paintings to encourage corrosion. Richard Davey records this by stating that

[...] the alchemy [Kiefer] practices is not just the discrete transformation of one thing into another, but an ongoing process, in which matter is not fixed but fluid, where at the heart of the material world is a dynamic atomic state that is constantly shifting and transforming, reconfiguring and being reborn, reaching out from itself into the space beyond. (Soriano et al 2014: 58)

Anselm Kiefer has used objects extensively in his work, some of them repetitively, such as straw and sunflowers, to return over and over again to questions that revolve around the past and, in particular, dark parts of twentieth century German history. He was born in Germany at the very end of the Second World War and has been returning continuously in his work to this time in German history, exploring personal and collective, national memory. Significant aspects of my own practice, as mentioned earlier, include engaging with the discourse around overcoming trauma and transforming difficult legacies of the past into creative material in order to resolve, catalogue and archive past memories of loss so that I can, amongst other things, move forward. Kiefer's work is a powerful example that this is possible, that recreating

memory can lead to the understanding and acceptance of the past and that this in turn can bring spiritual transformation.

A more obvious signifier of time in *Internal Terrains* is a metronome, the core time marker that I use throughout the performance: I cover it with a bell jar to muffle its sounds in limbo when I wish the time to stop. It more or less continuously permeates large periods of the soundscape in the performance as a reminder of time passing even in situations of limbo, in in-between spaces, in the moments between photographs and addresses in the film, even when the camera does not seem to be able to decide which way to go. It is there in the sound accompanying the salt seeping from the bag. The repetitive gestures in the performance are in constant play with the metronome: catching salt in the palm of my hand, twirling under the cage, playing the violin, reciting addresses on exilic journeys. In all this the metronome is not a measure of time but a marker of time in which no alchemy or transformation appears to be happening. Svetlana Boym writes about the monument in Prague called *The Metronome* (1991) by artist Vratislav Karel and refers to it as something that also points to interruptions and ‘offers a reflection on time itself. The rhythm of the Metronome deprives time of direction; it is oriented neither toward the past nor toward the future’ (Boym 2001: 231). The ideas of interrupted time and lack of direction create a link with the second personal text, the ‘mother text’, which traces what can happen to the mind when it gives up under the pressure of traumatic historical events. Both the ‘father text’ and ‘mother text’ are personal and autobiographical. ‘Father text’ makes a reference to the time I was leaving the country in war and ‘mother text’ refers to the time towards the end of the first period of my exilic stateless years. At the end of that six-year period I started resolving my legal

status and citizenship via a lawsuit against Croatia, when my mother visited me in Athens. In the process of cataloguing memories from the past in *Internal Terrains*, I travel back to that time and offer personal fragments of interactions between my mother and myself, alongside other associative, interrupted random fragments that come to my mind when I think of her, in order to remember, understand and put the troubled memories of her mental health decline to rest. The acceptance of this painful history is reflected through the transformation that the *a capella* lullaby song offers immediately following on from the 'mother text'. The lullaby itself is a utopian space in which time does not really exist, but it offers hope and personal resolve. The idea behind singing a lullaby to a child is so that it feels safe and loved, but this is the song written by my collaborator, composer Bob Karper, which I have modified and populated with places like the Adriatic Sea and characters such as Susan Sontag, Andy Warhol, Karl Marx and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. They each had their own artistic, cultural and political strategies in recording their own and other people's traumas and suffering. This song – a gift to myself of arrested time, love, hope and transformation – is followed by a resolve, in a similar way to how the trilogy ended. At the end of *Suspended*, the final part of the trilogy, I travel across the space on my back, under a blue silk, in resolve and acceptance, creating a beautiful image gradually evolving in front of the audience. In *Internal Terrains*, the final scene of acceptance and resolve that follows on directly from the transformative power of the song, manifests itself through the relationship with an object, namely how I play the violin. I place myself into a harness, suspend myself over the violin placed on the floor and become one of the hanging objects myself. It is almost impossible to play the violin from that position, the sound coming out of it is cacophonous and interrupted, often falling out of tune and

correct timing, but also haunting and beautiful. If the desire to control objects – whose common denomination has in the show so far been their unpredictability – and the frustration over not being able to do so was present earlier in the performance, here my body finally surrenders the desire to control. Here, in the end, I seem to come to terms with and relax into the only sounds I can produce on the violin, whatever they sound like. I seem to be able to feel the poetry and the beauty of the sounds, as Kiefer, for example, can see the beauty and ‘poetry in the detritus of destruction’ (Soriano et al 2014: 49). The haunting, moving and beautiful sound coming out of the violin is the direct result of the body out of balance, suspended and surrendering to the state it finds itself in.

Addendum to sections one to four: soundscape

Finally, I would like to say a few words about the soundscape permeating the whole performance in a deliberately physical and spatial way, grounded in the idea of repeating, returning, and falling in and out of balance, evolving in relation to my body and objects in the space. The soundscape has been designed to repeat the objects and the sounds they create, to disturb the stability of my gestures and occasionally to get in the way of the text that I, the performer, need to negotiate, with and against, all other layers in the performance. Sometimes the sound will be repeating itself in variations. Some other times, the sound a specific object produces will be repeating what has already been heard in the soundscape, even if the audience only register it on a subconscious level. For example, a swoosh of the foil first appears recorded in the opening track *Balance*, and is only heard for real a little later in the performance. Other

times repetitions in sound happen only on a tangential or metaphorical level, such as the recording of the Tesla's Jacob's ladder static, or an added piercing quality to the sound between the foil and the mask, or a metal object rolling in a bell jar that I use to cover the metronome. *Rise*, the sound triggered by my interaction with the cage and the small film projected out of it, in the composer Bob Karper's words from our email exchange:

[...] has an overdrive for the electricity sound to match the lights spread on the floor. It has eerie time-stretched flexitone sounds, pitched to the key of Db to fit the piano that enters a third way into the track, that starts you spinning. The piano is a variation on a movement from the final piano piece in the show, *November*, played on a slightly out-of-tune upright. To me this helps place the scene in a distant time, complementing the ancient fables in the text.

Another track, *Hera*, begins with the film *This is Me Here*, about forty addresses in less than four decades of my life, after I start the metronome and cover it with the bell jar. It also has a steady metronomic clicking sound that Karper describes as 'not tied to the beat of the music itself and creating three distinct rhythms on stage: the live metronome, the recorded metronome and the steady bass and drum of the track itself'.

The sounds and objects echo each other in diverse layers of repetitions, communicating through variations, exact replicas, exaggerations and discrete suggestions of each other. Through this process they synchronise with the gestures of my body and the words I utter, or do the opposite – challenge me further in my own rhythm of finding and losing my balance. Considering the decision to start the enquiry with objects, creating sound from that perspective was not a small challenge, especially considering the fact that objects and sounds sit on opposite ends of the continuum between the visible and invisible, material and non-material, touchable and

untouchable, objective and subjective. The solution for this relationship was again in the spatial approach to it and in the organisational principles so that the sound works in response to objects as a critical sonic architectonic element, built into the foundations of the performance. The final track in the show, *November*, is a good evidence of it and Karper reflects on this process:

It is a solo piano piece consisting of several changing rhythmic movements, rooted in one repeated note: Db. The track consistently veers away from this note, expanding and contracting, but always returns to it. Variations on the themes from this piece are used throughout the performance in other pieces: fragments are found in *Balance*, one section in *Rise* and the break in *Hera*, when the sound of rain begins to fall.

In *November*, however, the spatial collaborative thinking is revealed through how the compositional elements bring the feel of completion to *Internal Terrains*. As I am rearranging the bulbs and placing them around specific objects, charting the cartography and the routes of memory working in space, the whole stage, with all objects, with my body and the compositional score, work together towards its poetic closure. On the violin I will be producing the very personal, individual and fragile sounds; however soon they will be heard and interpreted against the backdrop of a more dramatic, overarching *November* sound joining in.

Conclusion: discursive contexts

Encounter Two has emerged as a result of my preoccupation with two discursive contexts, one of them related to my continued interest in the trauma of displacement and the other related to the methodologies involved in making a performance about it.

I conducted research directly through practice and in writing about it I deliberately drew on personal and autobiographical material, as well as on the practice conducted by other artists exploring this and similar cultural issues, relying less on performance theory than I did in the previous chapter. I realise that this approach may mean that there are gaps in my research; however my desire was to frame the research within the limitations of my own and other artists' involvement with trauma and memory. As a person inscribed with my own experiences of displacement and loss, my research and the validity of the analysis are manifested through the sharing of personal experience with the audience via the interweaving of the practice (making) and the analysis of it (writing) using the same methodologies in both, and drawing on other artists' practice throughout. In other words, the focus of my practical research in this encounter has simply been on how practice can handle trauma. A performance resulting from it is a reiteration of the trauma, and writing about the performance is another layer of reiteration. Setting the initial directions to start creating new work through objects by using three strategies – repeating and returning to the source of trauma, placing my body out of balance, and creating fragmented episodes – presented certain challenges and limitations. However, after an initial period of frustration, a realisation occurred that objects demanded more focus and awareness of the space in which I experimented than was previously the case when the experimentation occurred through the use of my body. Once this happened the limitations turned into a form of liberation, as the established framework allowed flexibility for the methodologies to expand and take into account the emergence of the spatial relationship between the objects, sounds, text and images. Entering the work through objects and working with music, text and image simultaneously, rather than creating them later in response to the body, made

me consider *mise en scène* in new ways and perhaps more cinematically. This way of working asked for precise attention to the relationships evolving between the various layers – rather than the layers themselves describing, clarifying or adding to the material generated in and from the body. This, in turn, allowed me to play and experiment with the familiar and strange meanings of the objects and to work with them in regards to the states I was exploring, to my personal history and to other people's histories in the performance, rather than illustratively. This not only added to the surreal feel of the performance, but it also enhanced the feeling of being out of balance that already existed within the set-up and the nature of the objects and installations in the space. But rather than working towards increasing my own physical skill in that place of imbalance, as was the case in the trilogy (where I learned, through practice, to balance myself on the wobble board, layer of apples and so on), I shifted the focus towards getting deeper into occupying that place of imbalance until I started feeling more comfortable within it. In that sense, perhaps we could look at the meaning of home in exile as something that can be interpreted as a state of mind, in which the acceptance of the situation can be achieved and thus the need to return to and repeat the trauma would gradually diminish. Inevitably this would need to follow on from the period of understanding, grieving and dealing with the trauma, but it would eventually mean that a new home could become a place of celebration and survival. Judith Butler reflects on this state of mind as the condition in which:

[...] one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly for ever. Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say *submitting* to a transformation) the full result of which one cannot know in advance. There is losing, as we know, but there is also the transformative effect of loss, and this latter cannot be charted or planned' (Butler 2006: 21)

Previously, each part of the trilogy suggested a form of acceptance and transformation in its ending. *Rupture* produced an image of hope with me lying on the floor with a candle on my abdomen, but the parting text was still about the past and the need to return to it. *Asphyxia* ended with a surreal image, suggested through a poem, of me walking in my local park with a tiger, a creature as displaced in this environment as I was, but I still needed this powerful creature next to me. *Suspended* was a celebration of the process of speaking up for myself, but the long blue material unrolling over me in the performance space suggested visually that the past was still significantly present, even if covered with a gorgeous piece of silk. *Internal Terrains* repeats and returns to the same traumas that the trilogy did, but in the final scene it dispenses with this idea of the need to return to the past. It achieves that through the awareness and recognition of the significance of the repetitive returns. It also achieves that through speaking again about key traumatic events, but then at the end of the performance the register moves from the past to the present through the lullaby that I created for myself, and through the final acceptance of the fact that complete control of the past, as well as the present, is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Suspended in the harness I try to play the violin and through the problematic nature of that challenge I celebrate the sound that manages to come from the instrument nevertheless – as beautiful in its difference as any other sound we would normally expect to hear from a violin. If the trilogy pointed to the fact that the body itself may be the only reliable home, the only constant in the exilic life, through working with objects and other layers in *Internal Terrains* simultaneously, the performance suggests other versions of home that may be possible and comfortable, at least temporarily. These could perhaps include a circle of bulbs, a space and time between here and there or now and then,

and even the performance itself – perhaps as a ‘primary site of resistance’, as the cultural theorist bell hooks would describe the place where we live (hooks 2013: 189). As a site of resistance and a site from where one can speak out, performance as home thus ensures one of the crucial requirements for the recovery of the survivor, which is the sense of self-empowerment. Performance as home can offer an empowering, if not necessarily a safe space for sharing traumatic memories for the performer and her audience. If the sharing and exchanges with the audience in the performance space are empathic and meaningful, they can contribute to resolving painful memories – in the performer and the audience alike. Performing traumatic memories can be a powerful way to reinsert the ability to take an active role in the process of the reconstruction of the self.

If we think of the body as a site of memory and accept that embodied, autobiographical knowledge can be mapped through repetitive returns to the past in order to collect the material and organise it in performative manifestations, this brings us back to Jane Rendell’s architectural thinking, which appeared crucial for me in *Internal Terrains* at the stage of constructing the light bulbs installation. Working through the points of her interest architecturally, spatially, allows Rendell to analyse the artworks she selected through the lens of identity. In doing so, she also notices that the disciplines she draws on (no matter how practical, philosophical, esoteric or political they are) highlight the physicality and psychology of mapping, locating, situating, positioning and investigating boundaries; i.e. the relationship between space and identity is crucial both materially and conceptually. She is interested in the knowledge that emerges through movement between these categories and draws on the feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti’s conditions that refuse fixity (Rendell 2010: 2-

3). The knowledge evolves through movement and Rendell talks about transitional spaces, travelling distances, encountering others and rearranging. These categories, related to place and movement, emerged as significant in the trilogy but were particularly important in *Internal Terrains* in terms of entering the process of making via objects and organising the performance space in terms of the fragmentary episodes, or rooms in the home demarcated by light bulbs.

When designing new buildings or renovating old houses there are techniques which allow architects and engineers to reveal or conceal the secrets of both the spaces and the lives occupying a home. For example, in Japanese traditional architecture, which Tanizaki wrote about and lamented insightfully and poetically (2001), this is strategically achieved by creating spaces populated only by shadows, in which objects and people can disappear from view, and the privacy and the peace of the home can be maintained. This is mainly achieved by structural, architectonic shapes and lighting, and *Internal Terrains* draws on these techniques. I mentioned earlier in this chapter that I deliberately created an environment in which suspended objects could exist in their own shadows. Where is autobiographical work situated in terms of revealing and concealing to the audience the content dwelling in the shadows, hidden deep within our bodies and memories? Sidonie Smith claims that 'Life narrative inextricably links memory, subjectivity, and the materiality of the body' (Smith and Watson 2010: 49). The materiality of the body occupied by the exilic artist, who has decided to speak about traumatic memories and create subjective work about crossing borders and migration, is inextricably linked to numerous spaces in transit, limbo and a long line of abandoned temporary homes and changed addresses. However, despite the fact that autobiographical artwork allows one to look 'inside', Jane Rendell suggests that 'the

confessional can be understood as a form of psychic architecture, where the act of revealing transforms into one of concealing, and the details construct separations, as well as openings between one and another' (Rendell 2010: 50). In *Internal Terrains*, as in my practice prior to it, I have chosen, deliberately and strategically, in exchanges with the audience, to use poetic expression focusing on details, which sometimes describe and reveal and at other times obscure the actual events by giving them a dreamlike, poetic and surreal quality. These exchanges evolve through a variety of iterations – perhaps silently during the performance, verbally through post-show conversations, sub-consciously in thinking about it and remembering after the performance, and analytically in revisiting and writing about it. Repetition marks each step on these journeys between the known and the unknown: in life that generates the material for performance, in the process of making and presenting work, and in the numerous ways the work may be received. A series of encounters are required for this process to work: in a sketch book or a note pad, through discussions with collaborators, in a studio on my own, in rehearsal room with the artistic team, on stage in front of the audience, through the reception of the work, in the evaluation process and reporting to funders, in the documentation of the performance, in extracting installations from it for exhibitions in galleries afterwards.

I realise that in all of the above iterations I am the designer, editor, guide and architect shaping the material that will be presented to the audience. In the same way that an architect would position a window, highlight an angle or add a curve in order to visually enlarge the space or make it darker or contribute to a certain mood, I am in charge of the *mise en scène* and in charge of what will be confessed and what will remain hidden or unsaid in mapping the narratives of migratory journeys. Often the

strength of a certain performance episode (related to a particular memory) will reveal itself through the hidden and untold, and the fragmentary structure of the performance allows this to happen. This will activate suspense and create the space and moment in the performance for the audience's imagination by allowing them to relate to the material via their own personal experiences of loss, trauma or crossing borders (regardless of what kind of losses and what type of borders these may be). The power of the whole performance may depend on the performer's ability to make decisions about what is revealed and what remains hidden. The British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid used the methodology of leaving some aspects of the work deliberately unfinished in creating urban environments alongside what she referred to as a residual quality of a place, to create incomplete spaces. She believed this 'enliven[ed] a dialogue with the immediate surroundings and instil[led] a counterpart to the clear, crystalline depiction of form' (Hadid 2000: 213). This follows her desire to construct an 'ambivalent environment' by 'blurring boundaries between inside and outside' (213). This approach in architecture, closely aligned and compatible with the ways I have used the autobiographical material in my practice, was one of the reasons to borrow the title of Hadid's chapter in *Architecturally Speaking: Practices of art, architecture and the everyday* (2000) to name my performance *Internal Terrains*. Both the chapter and the performance deal with the personal, political and social material in regards to the creations that are deeply connected to the concepts of space and time, within and without. Hadid perceived a building as an organism and I think of body as home. We are both interested in memories and where they are stored. Earlier in this text I invoked memories as residing under our outer skin, while Hadid wrote, in regards to her architectural extension of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, about 'a

membrane between the outside of the building and its more inner, private spaces. A kind of memory skin, walked upon and walked through' (227).

In the short conclusion to follow from this chapter, building on Butler's idea of the transformative power of engaging with loss on a deep level, here primarily conducted through practice-based and practice-as-research, I will question briefly what the artist's active role in reconstructing the trauma and therefore the story of herself leads to. If working through the trauma using artistic strategies leads to a resolve (as a resolution of something previously unresolved), what the result of that process may be and if a resolve could lead to another departure and consequently another arrival into yet another unresolved territory in the future.

Departure

In one of his essays André Aciman asks himself, as much as his readers, why should anyone care about past memories, past cities and displacements that embody us? Annoyed with himself and his impulses that took him to the streets of Alexandria, so different that day from his nostalgic memories of the city, he goes on to explain that his desire was ‘to bridge the things here to things there, to rewrite the present so as not to write off the past’ (Aciman 2001: 38). His determination to achieve this is manifested through his effort to ‘rescue things everywhere, as though by restoring them here [in Alexandria] I might restore them elsewhere as well’ (38). In this way he attempts to resolve the conflict between his past and his present, before the memories of the past dissolve into something out of reach. How can one resolve becoming foreign with what was once intrinsically part of one’s physical and psychic fibre, without dissolving with it? I propose in my thesis, using practice-based and practice-as-research, that this may be possible through repetitive and structured returns to the past, as well as recognising and embracing the state of being out of balance. Using these methodologies to create a new discourse, I provide the time and space for encounters with the reader and the audience, the time and space in which temporal and geographical, fragmented and associative journeys, as well as experiences of losses and transformations can be shared. The fragmentary nature of the work is a deliberate choice, not just a device referring to the way our thoughts return to the past in which the displacement occurred. The fragments themselves get displaced by me in the creative process, and then arranged in such a way that the audience and readers can emotionally connect themselves to the material explored. In the trilogy the body of the performer became the material signifier to which the audience attached itself, whilst in *Internal Terrains* the objects as mnemonic devices became the main tool connecting to

and tapping into the recipients' own experience of loss. Objects were used to start a dialogue and invite audience members to devise their own associations with the repetitions of trauma in the search for a transformation. Methodologies such as repetition, placing myself out of balance and fragmenting thus become shared rituals between me, as an artist and researcher, and the audience, allowing us to remember the past and look together for a resolution by examining the wounds under the scars.

How have some of the other artists I have referred to in this thesis been navigating this path between losses and transformations? What have their practices resolved and how did they manage their traumatic pasts as points of departure, without allowing them to suffocate the present (and their creative research and output) or dissolve into something that bore no traces of the transformative journeys?

Ana Mendieta, a Cuban-American artist, is best known for her *Silueta* series of body-earth works dealing with the wound of departure from her country of origin. She explains it succinctly as follows: 'Having been torn from my homeland (Cuba) during my adolescence, I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast out from the womb (Nature)' (Viso 2008: 297). Mendieta wrote the above lines in her mid-thirties, just two years before her death in 1985, and they are testament to years of artistic negotiation of the traumatic past and repetitive returns to it. During this period hundreds of images and films bearing traces of Mendieta's body in natural materials such as soil, wood, grass, water, snow and others were created. In the lead-up to her premature death, however, Mendieta's work seemed to have started moving gradually towards celebrating the past, towards reconciliation with it, and this was revealed through her totemic and celestial wood sculptures that developed directly from the dialogues between her body and earth through the *Silueta* works²³.

Mona Hatoum found herself in the UK when the war erupted in Lebanon in 1975 and was unable to return to her home country. Early images that she created, sometimes using her own body, were harrowing. One such was *The Negotiating Table* (1983), in which she wrapped herself tightly in transparent smeared plastic and gauze, barely able to breathe, and placed herself as an exhibit on a table, lit theatrically from above. Initially in her performances and installations she worked through her own autobiographic experiences relating to her exilic past. A strong example of it was *Measures of Distance* (1988), a video installation, in which Hatoum used a film of her mother in a shower, combined with letters from her in Arabic script on screen. This was accompanied by a voiceover of Hatoum reading the letters aloud in English and a conversation between her and her mother. In subsequent works Hatoum has used her own body, organic materials such as hair, and numerous objects, for example kitchen utensils, light bulbs, soap, sand and suitcases. However, increasingly in her work she has been paying closer attention to political and military conflicts rather than her own past, although her exilic experiences of loss continue to inform her work²⁴.

In one of the previous chapters I mentioned Margareta Kern's exploration of Yugoslav women guest workers in Germany tangentially connected to her own family history. Her previous work was even more autobiographical and explored costumes relating to personal histories. It looked at graduation dresses, made by her seamstress mother, for a generation of young women graduating in the midst of the political and economical embargo imposed by the West over the former Yugoslav territories in the 1990s. These dresses, named by Kern 'clothes for living', were juxtaposed with 'clothes for dying', a series of performative photographs in which old women in former Yugoslav villages posed in their homes, after a series of conversations recorded on

video, with the clothes they have prepared for themselves to be buried in. Working through her own traumatic history, as an artist who left former Yugoslavia as an 18-year old refugee from Bosnia, Kern's practice has in recent years been visibly moving towards exploring political events unrelated to her own personal history (such as miner strikes and various demonstrations in England), merging performance, visual art, protest and activism²⁵. Ai Weiwei, the Chinese artist often persecuted and censored by the state, shares and expands on Hatoum's and Kern's approaches and aesthetics in his view that artists who have experienced or witnessed trauma or abuse due to political conflicts have the privilege and responsibility to share the knowledge available to them about how states operate and dominate ordinary lives²⁶.

Behjat Omer Abdulla, a Kurdish mixed media artist working between performance and visual art, also mentioned in previous chapters, has worked through his own personal history as an asylum seeker and the histories of other people affected by migration, with a view to opening wider public debates on the issues of war and exile. Using the very methodologies employed by authorities when interviewing exiles he brings forth anonymous personal histories that nobody seems to be interested in and attempts to make a small portion of something invisible visible. This will sometimes involve flash photography in a room that may be evocative of a detainee centre, but for Abdulla the passport-like photo will be either blurred or otherwise manipulated, or become a drawing, in order to communicate more than just an anonymous face accompanied by a number in a file. He is interested in images that reveal complicated stories around crossing borders and other painful situations the exiles find themselves in. In parallel to this, he also continuously re-examines the values and ethics related to using his methodologies. Abdulla believes that when someone's life has been lost in

limbo, it is important that he, as an artist, if he is able to gain access to what has been lost, corrects that and makes a statement about it. When I asked him who that statement was for, Abdulla told me that it was for him as much as for his audience: 'For me to get rid of the anger and to get over what happened in my life. The only way I can tell these stories is by making a piece of drawing or a piece of video work'. Abdulla's sometimes controversial methodologies, as well as his own questioning of them throughout the process reveal that PaR is often not only about the subject of its research but also about itself. As a methodology, PaR seems to be continuously looking for emergent discourses as well as reflecting on the process of how discourse is generated through research, questioning it along the way. In this context, it is uncertain whether exile as a condition and PaR exploring this condition can ever reach an end-point and be resolved completely.

In looking at other artists' practices throughout the thesis I was interested not only in their methodologies, how they return to their traumatic pasts and how they stage their autobiographies, but also whether I would find evidence of how their working through the trauma of exile and migration may have led to some kind of resolution in their practice. The artists involved were only a few, and my research has of course not been focused in-depth on this specific issue, however it may be worth noting that in cases when a certain kind of resolution has been noticed in practice via a shift towards a more celebratory, playful and joyous work emerging – it appears to have taken many years. This is perhaps not surprising considering that it takes a long time to understand fully the meaning of the created works by the artists themselves, let alone for the new trajectories to emerge, evolving from working on the material around trauma. Mendieta's totemic sculptures and Kern's turn towards political activism

through art may provide some examples of these shifts. A certain kind of playfulness also evolves gradually in Anselm Kiefer's work after many years of imagery featuring dark forests, Nazi salutes, burnt books, ashes, blooded snow landscapes and representations of death and devastation, leading to recent big colourful mixed-media landscapes of enlarged grass, wheat and similar vegetation. Whatever the case may be, traumatic pasts appear to be firmly built into the foundations of the more joyous work. In an interview I conducted with Abdulla, he comments on the trajectory from one work to another by saying: 'Every time I finish a piece of work it opens up new questions and these questions give me the energy to start the next piece of work – this is how the pieces are linked with each other'. Perhaps this points to the way the past can be resolved without it being dissolved and lost – by inhabiting it fully and allowing it to embody the work as it develops and modifies itself along a continuum of departures and arrivals.

This thesis has paid attention to various departures – towards new geographical territories, new practical research and new performance shared with the public. Departing on a journey of crossing borders into exile is not simple and there is no universal method of doing that. Departing on a practical piece of research similarly has no strict formulas that can be followed step-by-step to complete the task. In terms of performing the material, departure in search of a point of meaningful sharing and communication with an audience is an equally unbalancing, challenging and slow process of experimentation, marked by trials, errors and occasional successes. Both exile and performance are lived in the moment, but charged and heightened by the memories and embodied experiences of previous departures and arrivals. What the audience are able to see and experience through the encounters with PaR that deals

with the trauma of exile becomes the visible, perhaps final stop on these journeys. At that point the artist/researcher can celebrate the arrival, but soon after that start preparing for another departure towards the unknowns that characterise every beginning of an artistic research trajectory. As this creative history repeats itself, it also relies on the embodied knowledge from previous departures and arrivals and the history of the performance itself. Performance art as a form has often provided a home for marginalised women's, queer, non-white and other underprivileged voices to stage their personal material that carries political and representational value. Examples of this can be seen in the works of Ursula Martinez, Tim Miller, Stacy Makishi, Peggy Shaw and Guillermo Gomez Peña to name but a few. My practice consciously strives to contribute not only to this political performance history, but also to the history of analysis of the work that has dealt with trauma, including that of Diana Taylor who writes about it in the context of archive, bell hooks in the context of race, André Aciman in regards to nostalgia, Cathy Caruth and many others in relationship to psychoanalysis, to name but a few approaches. My original contribution to the existing knowledge foregrounds PaR as a means of research into the trauma of displacement due to migration. I contribute my practice, the analysis of my practice and the ways the practice performs on page to generate discourse on how the creative work of a performance artist, who uses body and memory as critical performance tools, reveals the logic of exilic subjectivity and materiality, as well as the political status of performance as a medium engaging with this complex theme. This involves a detailed examination of three distinct methods of working applied here: repetitive returns to the personal and historical source of trauma, placing the body out of balance and fragmentary composition to illuminate displacement as rooted both in loss and

liberation. I strive to contribute to the existing body of practical and critically analytical work by using practice-as-research and autobiographical material to speak as a migrant voice, as a person displaced by the civil war in former Yugoslavia, who is living and making work about it in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, a time of unprecedented migration and many unwelcoming borders erected in the face of people fleeing wars and other tragedies. In that way, through reflecting on my exilic past using practice-as-research, I am actively, poetically, personally and politically engaging with the current, complex political present.

Appendix

Internal Terrains script

Stage Directions in *Italics* (including the lighting, which is controlled on stage by the performer).

Sound Directions in **bold**, preceded by SX.

Video Directions in **bold**, preceded by VX.

Time on DVD in (brackets) throughout the script.

All text spoken by the performer, Natasha Davis.

Abbreviations:

CS – centre stage

DSC – downstage centre

DSL – downstage left

DSR – downstage right

SL – stage left

SR – stage right

USC – upstage centre

USL – upstage left

USR – upstage right

PRESET:

Stage set with lighting dimmer CS. Twenty cables leading out of the dimmer with twenty light bulbs at the end of each cable, formed into an approximate circle.

Hanging from long silver chains at various heights are the following objects: a fencing mask above a foil, a red cloth bag with salt above a silver tray, a cage holding a small projector showing a film, a harness above a violin, a looped chain, and three empty chains. A few other objects are placed on the floor: a metronome, a glass bell jar, an electric shock machine, a mouth guard, a remote-control car, a laptop and a microphone.

SX 1: *Balance* on low volume (simple quiet piano phrases mixed with various sounds used throughout the show).

Walk left to right alongside the back wall, carrying and caressing a black taxidermied crow while audience enter.

AUDIENCE IN PLACE. CLEARANCE:

Put the crow on its empty chain USL to hang.

Walk to the dimmer CS and turn the bulbs up to (5).

Walk to the mask DSL.

(01:27)

Take the foil and adjust a few cables on the floor with the foil tip to create space for moving around. Pause to look at the audience with the foil in hand and on the floor, like a walking stick. Swoosh four times with the foil.

SX 2: Stepper (piercing metallic phrases of melody and synthesizer).

Caress the mask and play with it, creating a gentle scraping sound. Move the foil across the grid from inside. Start text. While speaking, play with the foil and mask, swinging it back and forth, ducking occasionally underneath. Rotate the mask around in a circle

*around the performer's body. Walk back and forth alongside the mask in the rhythm of
the sound.*

(03:09)

[NATASHA]: I thought this was a superior way of living.

I was wrapped around one of them and the other one was wrapped around me.

Beautiful, long-haired Argentinian boys.

I wanted to stay with them forever.

It's funny how desire dominates you for a while,

possibly for a long while,

and then it doesn't any more, after numerous ballads of dependency.

I visited Kitaj, the painter, in his Hollywood home, a few years before he died.

We talked about his wife Sarah, who died young, about passion,

about war in the Balkans and about his daughter, who was then a soldier in Iraq.

I brought him Murakami's *Wind Up Bird Chronicle* and for some reason we ended up reading together the pages about a torture in a Japanese war, which included peeling skin from a living person's back.

After which we had a cup of tea, and he showed me his *Angels*, the paintings that had just returned from an exhibition abroad.

And then out of nothing, he just said:

'It's so great to have no desire any more.'

I feel so free...’

Hold the mask far away the length of the foil and slowly prod the head into the mask.

Deliver Nikola Tesla text through the mask.

(05:23)

[NATASHA]: Nikola Tesla, the scientist famous for his experiments with electricity, originally a Serbian man from Croatia, was so dedicated to his work that, the story goes, he got himself castrated, to stop wasting precious ‘electricity’ time.

Finish by prodding the foil through the mask from above, make sure the sound of it is nicely heard, and leave it to hang diagonally.

Walk towards the cage SR.

SX 3: Stepper coda.

(06:22)

Approach the cage slowly. Face the mini projector and move to allow it to send images onto the neck. Raise the left hand to the projected image.

SX 4: Rise (electrical slow lilting melody softened by the quiet sustained piano rhythm played on a slightly-out-of-tune upright).

Move the left arm in and out in front of the beam so that the film moves along the skin.

Move the right hand and arm.

Rotate slowly until the back is towards the cage. Begin to twirl and then, a few moments later, also to speak.

(08:04)

[NATASHA]: In Serbian epic heroic poetry, women betraying their husbands, for kingdom, for love, for power, and being punished. Or not, if a husband is particularly wonderful. If a woman doesn't betray her husband, if she is virtuous, then she, for her extended virtue, can occasionally be built into a wall of a fortress, to make it strong, indestructible. Or into a post, which holds a bridge across the river, so that the bridge never falls. If a woman has a baby, or a small child, then a window can be built around her breast, so that the child can drink milk as long as the mother lives. A legend says one mother lived for almost a year and that milk still flows there.

Slow down twirling and move away from the cage to the opposite side. Make a twist and 'listen' to the cage. Then turn around towards CS and make a back bend.

[NATASHA]: Or a woman can be a widow dressed in black.

Bend to the front and uncurl.

Walk to the dimmer and turn the bulbs down to (2).

Walk to the metronome CS and wind it four times. Leave it there.

*Walk to the glass bell jar USR. Lift it and hold it briefly first, then walk slowly across
the back wall.*

SX 5: Coin (sustained atmospheric hollow sound of an amplified coin rolling in a bowl).

(11:31)

Slowly walk with the glass bell jar to the metronome.

Capture the metronome from above.

Walk to the laptop USC.

SX 6: *Hera* (rhythmic base, conflicting metronome rhythm creating a mild cacophony, slow manipulated accordion phrases, piano chords and sounds of rain).

Press start on the laptop.

VX 1: *This Is Me Here* film projected on the wall. The film is made of photographs of various locations where Natasha Davis lived, with her voiceover speaking out addresses and minimal poetic descriptions of the places in English, Serbo-Croatian and Greek.

As the voiceover plays, walk to the loop chain and start swinging back and forth. Then detach from it and:

Get into Decade One position – arms in ‘o’ between shoulders and abdomen, palms up: tremor.

Get into Decade Two position – arms spread out, palms out: sacrifice.

Get into Decade Three position – arms up and sideways, palms in: power.

Get into Decade Four position – arms resting sideways, palms in: peace.

(12:15)

[VOICEOVER]: This is me here, now. This is me there thirty years later. This is me there forty years earlier. This is me there twenty years later. This is me there thirty years ago. There, twenty-five years ago. There, ten years ago. This is me there thirty years ago. This is me there ten years later. This is me there forty years ago. This is me there forty-six years ago. This is me there twenty years later. There, thirty years later. This is me there twenty-five years later. (Followed by a list of numerous addresses and locations).

As the films approaches the end:

[NATASHA]: Somewhere in East London, near the park, eight years. And many more lost and forgotten addresses on exilic journeys, more than forty of them in less than four decades.

(17:36)

Walk to the laptop and stop the film. Then walk to the dimmer and raise the bulbs level to (6).

Walk to the electric shock machine DSC. Put the mouth guard in the mouth. Dial once and put the headphones onto the head. Stay like that in silence.

SX 7: Electricity & lullaby chords (sounds of an electrical Jacob's ladder followed by soft chords from *Your Mummy Loves You* lullaby).

Put the headphones on the side, take the mouth guard out and get up.

Take the crow from the chain and secure it on the frame of the remote-controlled car

SL. Switch on the remote control.

SX 8: *Software* (electrical computer software programme fed through a music programme and remixed into a bizarre dance track).

(20:58)

Operate the crow-car around the space. Stop when Software sound stops.

(23:34)

Walk back to the electric shock machine. Dial 331 371. Place one headphone on ear, the other near the mouth, as if to speak.

SX 9: Echoed voiceover: 'Mum... mum? Can you hear me mum? Mum... Would you recommend it mum?'

Walk to the dimmer and turn the bulbs down to (3).

(24:18)

Walk to the tray and salt DSC. Punch the bag with scissors from the tray and create a tiny hole. Salt begins to fall.

SX 10: *Balance* reprise.

Take a bulb and light the salt from the bottom up and the top down. Put the bulb next to the tray.

Hand under the salt: back of the hand up, palm down. Start 'catching salt' by opening and closing the hand rhythmically.

(25:45)

[NATASHA]: My father came with me to the station. We waited for the train for a long time. It got dark, then darker. It might have been one of the last trains going out, if not the very last train, and when it arrived it was almost carnivalesque, electric. With body parts, arms and heads, sticking out of windows, away from miasma, gasping for air, and trying to create just that tiny bit of extra room for themselves.

I don't know how I managed, but I did, with a suitcase too, which I could sit on. Next to an old skinny man in a vest, chain smoking and offering *rakia* from a dirty bottle. After a while, I started saying yes.

The year was 1992, I was 26 years old.

At occasional dark stations people were pulled off the train. Guns were shot, up in the air, I think, for more people to get on. I don't know what happened to those thrown out. I can almost see them walking through dry summer night Serbian land.

A heavily tattooed man approached me and asked me how I was. He said my father had grabbed him at the station and entrusted him with looking after his daughter, if he could reach me across the train. It makes me sad to think of my, now incapable and impractical father, who brought me up not on fairy tales but on his medical books with pictures of diseases, facial disfigurements, and girls who started menstruating at the age of four. You know, like: 'Once upon a time, there was a girl and she started her period when she was only four'. It makes me sad to think of my impractical father coming up with an idea like that at the chaos of that station. Smart. A Serbian man to a Serbian man... About and over a young Serbo-Croatian woman...

Stop catching salt. Stand with the hand under the salt for a few moments: palm up, hand down. Begin the text and brush the palms off each other to remove the salt.

[NATASHA]: I don't mind the experience. Perhaps I even like it. It's just that it...slows you down... It takes a decade...That's all...

Walk to the microphone and lie down next to it to speak.

(29:42)

[NATASHA]: Typical of our family, I was only told about it when she was already in a traditionally white room, with, so many times mentioned in literature, bars on windows, no mirrors. It's a *cliché*, but I didn't recognise her. She was crying so much, it was hard to say anything. Many years later I will be crying myself, in another hospital, for another reason, but that day, if I want to be honest, the episode didn't really affect me enormously. Nothing ever did then.

I remember how her look was sometimes crystal clear and lost in another world.

SX 11: Lullaby chords (soft piano chords underneath the text).

[NATASHA]: When I was a child, she walked into my room once and circled around whispering worriedly. She looked fragile in her transparent nightdress, which gently

caught the light of the first morning hour. Then she returned to bed and mainly slept for days. Nothing overly indicative at the time, but this is the picture that came back to me that day in the hospital.

I missed all her phases, insects living in her hair, friends turning against her, and then, surprisingly, she came to visit me in Athens, and be my happy mother for one summer.

I wish I'd realised there would be no more time, and that she'd come to say goodbye. She was thin, energetic, chatty, charming, flirtatious, I loved her Croatian accent. Slightly shy and open and raw. Hid nothing, was bothered by nothing – drinks or cigarette smoke, or hard seats on Greek buses. She even said 'Nothing can break me any more' before returning forever to her silent, stone-faced world.

I wish I'd known. I would have only talked about us. Told her all, asked her to tell me all.

(32:48)

Place a few bulbs in the following locations: next to the electric shock machine, on the hanging cage, next to the metronome, on the mask, on the loop chain, on the crow chain.

Stand USSR and start singing.

(34:14)

[NATASHA, singing]: Your mummy loves you

Now snuggle deep

And she will stay with you

While you're asleep

She loves her baby

Now rest your head

And she will be right here

While you're in bed

Your mummy loves you

And your daddy loves you

And your friends and neighbours love you too

Squirrels and honey bees

And flowers and redwood trees

And night skies and Adriatic Seas all love you

Now shut your eyes

Your mummy loves you too

You're her first prize

Walk slowly towards the harness.

Susan Sontag loves you

Andy Warhol loves you

And Karl Marx and Dostoevsky love you too

Pianos and steel guitars

And rockets and racing cars

And lightning and elemental stars all love you

Now settle still

Your mummy loves you too

And always will

(37:07)

Take the support harness, put it around the dress and hook it to the chain. Bend over.

Prepare the bow. Start the violin sound. Play for approximately forty seconds.

SX 12: November (rhythmic driving piano music, starting softly, volume increasing slowly).

Play the violin for another minute or two alongside November music.

Hang for a minute or two, suspended from the harness, then detach from the chain.

(41:30)

Rearrange bulbs in the whole space.

(43:49)

Dim everything slowly to complete darkness.

(45:00)

END.

Notes

1. The performance is also available online at <https://vimeo.com/143640928>. This recording is a mix of excerpts from Colchester Arts Centre and Project Arts Centre Dublin, identical in content to what was shown live at the University of Warwick.
2. Edward Said (2000) and George Lamming (2005) have written about the pain and pleasure of exile.
3. Niš is one of the Serbian cities where the newly developed CBU-97 cluster bombs (with devastating destructive power) were used later in the 1990s by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on the civilian population, such as around the central town market and a large tobacco factory. Source: *Former Yugoslavia: No War Crimes Here* by Gregory Elich, Global Research, 23 April 2015. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/former-yugoslavia-no-war-crimes-here/5444737>
4. After the Tito-Stalin split in 1948 Yugoslavia was not even an allied Eastern Bloc state any more.
5. The siege of Sarajevo turned out to be the longest siege in the history of modern war-fare (1992 – 1996).

6. The thoughts on jet-leg, dislocation and computer liquid damage, after being recorded here first, have since appeared in *Natasha Davis: Performance Film Installation* (Davis et al 2013: 30-31). The computer metaphor arises from the actual experience of this occurring to me.
7. This coincided with the time in which President of Croatia Franjo Tuđman introduced ‘nationality as a criterion for the employment of many workers in the state administration. This policy led to a large number of Serbs being made redundant’ (Glenny 1996: 13). In this climate, as a half Serb, I was unlikely to be welcomed to a newly formed Croatian state.
8. Pacitty Company, based in London and Ipswich and led by artistic director Robert Pacitti, is a performance and live art company which creates, commissions and curates new work, as well as hosts and curates SPILL Festival of live art.
<http://www.pacittycompany.com>
9. The thoughts on how I started developing *Rupture*, after being recorded here first, have since appeared in *Natasha Davis: Performance Film Installation* (Davis et al 2013: 30-31).
10. A version of this paragraph, after being recorded here first, has since appeared in *Natasha Davis: Performance Film Installation* (Davis et al 2013: 30-31).
11. Ibid.
12. Mona Hatoum referred to her performances as ‘installations in disguise’, thus highlighting the visual strength of her performance works and the medium that she was increasingly turning towards (Heinrich 2004: 81).
13. Jorge Rafael Videla was a senior commander in the Argentine Army and dictator of Argentina from 1976 to 1981. Reynaldo Bignone, Argentine general, served as dictatorial president in 1982 and 1983. Augusto Pinochet was dictator of Chile between 1973 and 1990 and Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean Army from 1973 to 1998.

14. A version of the description of Nauman's *Stairway*, after being recorded here first, has since appeared in *Natasha Davis: Performance Film Installation* (Davis et al 2013: 30).
15. In one of my current projects I am returning to the mythology of Vučković, deriving from the word wolf, and collecting stories about wolves in a Serbian village where my father is from. I also revisit the fact that my great-grandfather changed the family surname on a whim from Radovanić, which derives from 'happy' to Vučković, which derives from wolf. I revisit the fact that I was born with *lupus* (wolf in Latin), the illness with a high rate of mortality. I was given two weeks to live but somehow survived. I also happened to be born on the saint protector's day of all the Vučković families, an Orthodox Christian holiday never celebrated by my Communist father to this day.
16. Marina Abramović's performance lasted twelve days at Sean Kelly Gallery, New York City in 2002 where she lived, showered, slept and fasted in view of the audience for twelve days. Sources: *Marina Abramović* by Stiles et al and *Live Art and Performance* by Heathfield, as listed in Bibliography.
17. The quote appeared in Guardian online, downloaded 28 May 2014
http://www.guardian.com/books/2014/may/28/maya-angelou-in-fifteen-quotes?CMP=fb_gu
18. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is a system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions.
19. UK performance company with more than forty interdisciplinary projects behind them in performance, installation, publication and film. <http://www.placelessness.com>
20. In my thesis I have decided to use practice-as-research instead of practice-led-research, the term used by Robin Nelson and more commonly used in the United Kingdom.
21. This collaboration has generated a range of non-standard and richly illustrated performance publications on Raimund Hoghe, Ron Athey, Oreet Ashery and other artists.

22. For example: *The Storehouse* (1998) at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City, and *The Reserve of Dead Swiss* (1990) at Tate Modern London.
23. For further materials on Ana Mendieta's *Silueta* series of works please refer to Blocker, Rosenthal and Viso as listed in Bibliography.
24. For further reading on Mona Hatoum please refer to Archer et al, Bell, Bertola, Heinrich and Panhans-Bühler as listed in Bibliography.
25. For further reading on Margareta Kern please refer to Kern and Kuburović as listed in Bibliography.
26. For further reading on Ai Weiwei please refer to Marlow et al as listed in Bibliography.

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